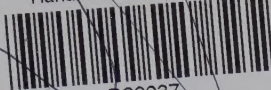




THE LIFE OF
LORD
KITCHENER

F W HACKWOOD



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The Life of Lord Kitchener

F. W. Hackwood

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CHAPTER I — INTRODUCTORY

WHAT man in the public eye fills the imagination like Lord Kitchener? To say that he excites our interest because he is the foremost soldier of the day but feebly expresses it; for this man with the sphinx-like gift of silence, who has lived in deeds, not words, whose life has been one undeviating course of devotion to duty; this man of iron will, cold aloofness and stern visage, exercises an influence on the public mind which amounts almost to a fascination.

That he wields some strange and subtle power over the crowd is indisputable. The secret of it may lie in the awe inspired by those marvellous successes he never fails to produce by the magic of his patient persistence; or it may be in that grim silence which makes him so coldly irresponsive to their enthusiasm; but whatever it may be, the effect is to make Lord Kitchener at once a popular hero, yet a man who is not popular in the ordinary sense.

His career, from the moment when he first became known to the public, has been fuller of the romance of reality than that of any other famous public man of the time. He has climbed to success his own way; by a whole-souled devotion to his profession, by untiring energy, and a belief in his work which has never slackened, till he stands to-day before the world, if not a great warrior, one of the most efficient organisers of victory ever known in the annals of warfare.

Horatio Herbert Kitchener, like many other notable men who have writ their names large in English history, is by birth and upbringing an Irishman, a fact he takes care never to keep in the background.

The family traces its descent from Thomas Kitchener (born 1666), who was agent to a Suffolk baronet, Sir Nicholas Stuart of Hartley Maudit. He was a native of Binstead, Hants, and came into Suffolk at the age of twenty-seven to take up this position under the lord of the manor of Lakenheath. By his wife Abigail he had three sons and three daughters, the youngest of the former being named Robert. Robert had two sons. The elder, Thomas, was born in 1740, and in 1764 married Martha Robinson, of Eriswell Hall, near Lakenheath. The eldest of their three

children was William Kitchener, a tea-merchant of London, admitted a freeman of the Clothworkers' Company in 1791. In the following year he married Letitia, daughter of Rev. Thomas Waldegrave, of Bury St Edmunds.

Of their eight children, Henry Horatio, born in 1805, was the seventh. He became Lieutenant-Colonel of the 9th Foot, and was married twice, his first wife, mother of our subject, being Frances, daughter of the Rev. John Chevallier, D.D., of Aspsall Hall, Suffolk. The Chevallier family, originally of Jersey, had been settled in East Anglia for many generations. Lieutenant-Colonel H. H. Kitchener, after serving with his infantry regiment in India, exchanged on his promotion into a cavalry regiment (13th Light Dragoons), and then, retiring from the army, took up his residence in England.

How the Colonel's famous son came to be born in Ireland will be told in the succeeding chapter. How he rose to fame in the Soudan by 'smashing the Mahdi' is a matter of quite recent history. From the moment he raised himself above the common ruck, the heralds and genealogists have been busy with the family name, though it does not seem that he, of his own body, is likely to perpetuate it. The original Kitchener arms are to be seen on the walls of the Clothworkers' Hall, a memorial of the family's association with the field of commerce. His mother's family is of Huguenot origin.

In Howard and Crisp's *Visitation of England and Wales*, a privately printed work issued in 1899, will be found the Kitchener pedigree, traced from William the tea-merchant of London, born at Lakenheath, Suffolk, 1768. In this elaborate genealogical tree practically every family detail, of place, name, and date, is given, with many facsimiles of signatures and some very fine portraits. In a companion volume, *Visitation of England and Wales — Notes*, edited by F. A. Crisp, also privately printed, which appeared in 1906, the pedigree of Kitchener of Binstead, Co. Hants, is given. This traces the genealogy of the aforesaid William back to a Thomas Kitchener of Whateley, whose will was proved at Winchester in 1555.

Herbert Kitchener's first accession of titled dignity was achieved by his military success at Dongola, for which he was created Knight Commander of the Bath. Then came the capture of Khartoum, for which Sir Horatio Herbert Kitchener was created (1st November, 1898) Baron

Kitchener of Khartoum and of Aspull in the county of Suffolk, both in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, with remainder to the heirs male of his body.

On 11th July, 1902, upon retiring from the Indian command, he was created Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum and of the Vaal in the Colony of the Transvaal, and of Aspull, Co. Suffolk, with remainder, in default of male issue, to his eldest daughter and her male issue, with remainder to his other daughters in priority of birth, and their male issue successively; and in default of such issue of his body, to his brother Colonel Henry Elliott Chevallier Kitchener, and his male issue, and in default, to his other brother, Major-General Frederick Walter Kitchener and his male issue.

The heir-presumptive under this special remainder, Henry Elliott Chevallier, Colonel retired, is his elder brother, born 1846; who in 1877 married Eleanor Fanny, only child of Lieutenant-Colonel Franklin Lushington, C.B. She died in 1897, leaving besides a daughter, a son, Henry Franklin Chevallier, born 1878, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. The other brother, Sir Frederick Walter, is younger than he, having been born in 1858.

Lord Kitchener's seat is Brome Park, Kent. His armorial bearings are gules, a chevron argent, surmounted by another azure, between three bustards proper, in the centre chief point a bezant (Kitchener) and over all, as an honourable augmentation, on a pile or, two flag staves saltire-wise, flowing to the dexter the Union flag of Great Britain and Ireland, and to the sinister a representation of the Egyptian flag all proper, enfiled by a mural crown gules, the rim inscribed 'Khartoum' in letters of gold, and as a further honourable augmentation, a chief argent thereon, on a pale gules a lion passant guardant or, between an eagle displayed sable, and on a mount vert an orange tree fructed proper.

Crests. — 1. (of augmentation). Out of a mural crown or, an elephant's head, supporting with the trunk a sword erect, point upwards proper, pommel and hilt or.

2. (Kitchener). A stag's head erased, transfixd through the neck by an arrow in bend point to the dexter all proper, and between the attires a horse-shoe or. *Supporters.* — On the dexter side a camel proper, bridle, trappings and line pendent, reflexed over the back gules, gorged with a collar or, suspended therefrom an escutcheon paly bendy azure and

ermine, a canton of the last, charged with a portcullis gold; and on the sinister side, a gnu proper, gorged as the dexter, suspended therefrom an escutcheon ermine charged with a chevron engrailed vert, thereon four horse-shoes, also gold. *Motto*, Thorough.

It is a piece of coat-armour which appears redolent — if one may speak so lightly of matters highly heraldic — of the hot air of Africa; which in its cryptic symbolism conveys even to the most unlearned mind some glimmering of the warlike exploits of our English Africanus.

Numerous other honours have, from time to time, been showered upon this successful soldier. The Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh have conferred honorary degrees upon him; during his Indian command he was admitted to the Indian orders, and in 1911 was made a Knight of St Patrick — the order of chivalry distinctive of the country of his birth. At the Coronation, Lord Kitchener (who was in command of the troops then assembled in the metropolis) bore the Third Sword, or Pointed Sword of Temporal Justice. The last honour to mention, but not the least, is the Order of Merit conferred upon him in 1902.

Shortly after his elevation to the peerage as Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, he was talking with Lord Cromer and a number of staff officers, and mentioned the difficulty he found in deciding how to sign his name. 'Kitchener of Khartoum' would, he said, be inconveniently long, and the choice seemed therefore to lie between 'K. of Khartoum,' or 'Kitchener of K.' Frankly, he said, he could not make up his mind. It was then that one of the party suggested a happy idea. 'Why don't you make it "K. of K."?' he asked; 'that would stand equally well for "Kitchener of Khartoum" or "King of Kings."' 'K. of K.' it has been, unofficially, ever since.

CHAPTER II — CHILDHOOD SPENT IN IRELAND

COLONEL HENRY H. KITCHENER, while paying a holiday visit to Ireland shortly after the potato famine of 1847, found himself one day in Dublin when a number of estates in the south-west of the country were being offered for sale under the working of the Incumbered Estates Act. Tempted by the extremely low prices that prevailed, he made a bid of about £3000 for one lot situated in County Kerry, of which, almost to his surprise, he found himself the purchaser.

With his wife and his little son, to whom they had given the name Chevallier, he soon afterwards took up his residence in Ireland, at first occupying Gunsborough Lodge, a white, square-built villa, about three and a half miles from the town of Listowel. Subsequently the family removed to Crotta House, near Ballylongford, where the fourth son, Frederick Walter, was born, 1858. There were five children altogether, four boys, Chevallier, Herbert, Arthur, and Walter, and a daughter, Millie.

Particulars concerning the early years of Lord Kitchener are extremely difficult to obtain, and it is tolerably clear that Mr Horace G. Groser, one of his lordship's first biographers, worked the field of information so closely that little or nothing is left for the gleaners who have followed in his footsteps.

It is, therefore, on his work, *Lord Kitchener — The Story of his Life* (London, C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., 1901), that the earlier chapters of this volume have had to be based, and full acknowledgment is hereby made.

Lord Kitchener was born on the 24th June, 1850, at Gunsborough Lodge, some three and a half miles from Listowel in the direction of the Shannon. The old name of the townland is Coolbeha, by which name the house is now more frequently called.

It was built by Mr Peirce Mahony in the 'forties,' as a shooting-lodge, and he it was who lent it to Colonel Kitchener in 1849, while he was looking around for a suitable property to purchase. It will be recalled to mind that the great Irish famine was in 1846-7, and at that time

properties could be had for next to nothing, after the country had been devastated by famine.

The Gunsborough property, as the name implies, belonged for many generations to the Gun family of Kilmorna and Carrigafoyle Castle (a branch of the present family of Gun of Rattoo, near Lixnaw, Co. Kerry), and had been originally purchased by them from Thomas Arnory, who got it under the Act of Settlement in Charles II's reign.

Mr Robert Gun-Cunninghame, D.L., of Mount Kennedy, Co. Wicklow, and Kilmorna, Co. Kerry, sold his Gunsborough and Kilmorna estates to the Mahony family about 1833 or 1834. Some years later (1839) Mr Peirce Mahony's eldest son, Mr Peirce Kenifeck Mahony, married the daughter of the original owner, Mr Robert Gun-Cunninghame; thus the Gun descent in the property passed down in the Mahony family. On the death of Mr G. Gun Mahony, D.L., of Kilmorna, in September, 1912, the property passed to his half-sister, Mrs de Janasz, whose mother was a Gun and whose brother, Sir Arthur Vicars, K.C.V.O., has supplied many of the details of this information.

The Gunsborough property was sold in 1882 under the Land Act, by the late Mr Gun Mahony, who retained only the woods and plantations to save them from being cut down and the already scantily-timbered country from being denuded of trees.

Mrs Gordon Cooke of Tanavalla, near Listowel (formerly Miss Elliot of Tanavalla), a lady who is well versed in the past social history of the County Kerry, distinctly remembers Lord Kitchener's birth in 1850, and recalls with pleasure that she has had him, as a baby, in her lap many times. Tanavalla is about two miles from Listowel on the Tralee Road, and Lord Kitchener invariably pays a visit to Mrs Cooke whenever he visits the scenes of his childhood.

Gunsborough Lodge (Coolbeha) was sold by its owner, the late George Gun Mahony, Esq., D.L., to the tenant. It is reported that when Lord Kitchener some few years ago went to look at his birthplace, he offered to pay for putting the house in proper repair for the widow of the tenant, but the old lady stoutly refused to entertain the proposal, because, as she told the neighbours afterwards, she was afraid he 'wanted to get a houl on the land,' — which is thoroughly characteristic of the people and the place.

Subsequently the Colonel purchased a larger estate in the neighbourhood of Tarbert, to develop which he launched forth into the pursuit of agriculture on a somewhat extensive scale; so much so that he took gentlemen pupils to learn farming, a subject of which he apparently had a good knowledge, either acquired or inherent — his brother, it may be mentioned, was agricultural manager to Lord Dunraven's estate. Anyway the Colonel's business capacity was of no mean order, for he next established a brick, tile, and drain-pipe factory, discerning a good market for such wares in the extensive operations being carried out in drainage work for the reclamation of the wet lands close by.

Young Herbert was about four years old when the family removed from Coolbeha. The property, which was near Elen, was called Ballygouglin, and, much improved by Colonel Kitchener, was sold when the family left Ireland, passing into the hands of Thomas Beale Browne, Esq., of Salperton, Gloucestershire.

Crotta House, where Herbert Kitchener resided with his parents until the age of sixteen, can be seen from the railway near Abbeydorney, or Montnagee, five and a half miles north of Tralee, where are some fine ruins of an ancient abbey. The house, now much decayed, is occupied by a farmer. For Ireland it appears to have been a rather good seventeenth century house, and to have possessed some pretensions to architecture quite unusual in those parts. Kilflynn Church, which he attended with the rest of the family, is a quaint little building which serves the Protestants of a neighbouring hamlet containing some five or six hundred people.

The busy and useful life led by the father, who interested himself also in the improvement of crops and the breeding of good stock, could not have been without a beneficial influence on the four boys, two of whom were destined for the army. A knowledge of agriculture, though it be but superficial, is not without its use to a soldier.

The education of the Kitchener children was commenced in the usual way at home under the direction of a governess, following which Herbert had a short succession of private tutors, being sent later to a private school. A story is told of him at this youthful period of his existence which is supposed to be worth relating for the moral it enables the teller to drag in.

The little fellow was much given to indulgence in dreamy habits and idle fancies, when his time, it was supposed, would have been better

employed in studying his books and conning his lessons. His father, a strict soldier and always a busy man of affairs, noticed his son's growing habit of mental dissipation, and peremptorily informed him that if he failed to pass the forthcoming examination at the private academy he was attending, he would be withdrawn and sent forthwith to the village dame school. And as he did not pass, the threat was promptly carried into effect, his relegation to the companionship of the village urchins being (according to the biographer who relates this anecdote) very much to the boy's horror.

It is not for one moment to be imagined that young Herbert Kitchener was horrified by any degradation of social status implied in this form of punishment, for happily, in the republic of childhood, social distinctions are unknown. The bitterness lay in the sore affront to his childish sense of self-importance, which regarded a tall, over-grown lad like himself as quite a superior being to one not yet emancipated from the thralldom of frocks. The moral drawn from the episode is that the boy felt the punishment so keenly, and learnt the lesson so thoroughly, that 'he has since then been as relentlessly unsparing to the failures of others.' It may have been so — and again, it may not.

Of the boy's early years there is comparatively little to relate. In babyhood he formed what has cynically been said to be the only attachment he ever developed for womankind — the enduring affection for his old nurse. Whether he has grown up a misogynist or not, an amusing anecdote is related illustrative of his easy subjugation by the 'sex,' even after he has laid all the rest of the world at his feet. The scene is said to have occurred on board an Indian liner. Lord Kitchener (as he had become) was dozing in a deck-chair; a small girl who was playing on the deck presently lost her ball among 'K.'s' feet. The General woke up.

'Pick up my ball,' she said imperatively. Lord Kitchener frowned.

'Pick up my ball!' insisted the maiden.

'Where's your nurse?' growled Kitchener.

'Pick up my ball!'

'Where's your mother?'

'Pick — up — my — ball!!'

The rising tone dismayed his lordship. He picked up the ball and fled.

Going back to his childhood's days, we are asked, on the testimony of one witness who knew the family intimately, to believe that he was 'a

very manly, active little fellow who could not keep quiet,' having a knack of getting into scrapes and no less adroitness in getting out of them again. We can certainly give ready credence to another who remembers him as a shy and retiring child, with a quietness of manner that bordered upon taciturnity. In this respect the child really has proved father to the man. Of his taciturnity a good tale is told showing how the habit had grown upon him in after-life, till it had gripped him and become engrained in his very nature. The incident referred to occurred a few years back at a fashionable reception in London.

Lord Kitchener entered the room, his face bronzed by the Indian sun, his eyes beneath the straight heavy eyebrows roving over the assembly with a slow scrutiny that seemed to take in everything, and coldly concern, itself with nothing. The chattering suddenly ceased, and the society crowd made way for the distinguished guest. As he moved slowly through the throng, two attempts — and only two — were made to break through that barrier of aloofness with which the great general never fails to surround himself whenever he appears in public.

First, a gushing lady stepped forward. 'Oh, may I have the honour of shaking hands with Lord Kitchener?' His lordship looked down upon her from his great height with a stony stare, shook hands, and, without a single word, passed on.

Then a leading light of the literary world, with a jaunty assumption of easy self-confidence, essayed to break through that icy barrier. With hand extended, and an insinuating smile lighting up his countenance, he approached, — 'May I have the pleasure? I am —,' mentioning a name as well known to the world as Lord Kitchener's own. The proffered hand was taken, but the soldier passed on as though he had never heard the name in his life before. No one else ventured into that chilly atmosphere of unconscious hauteur.

Yet young Herbert Kitchener was in all things boyish to a degree, and grew into a tall, lithe, active lad, well set up, full of spirit and exhibiting plenty of pluck when occasion required it. Crotta House, where the family were then residing, was in the midst of a fine health-giving country, visited by the breezes of the broad Atlantic, from which it was inland only seven miles; and the children were accustomed to take every opportunity of enjoying outdoor exercise, as driving, swimming, and what else in those days was open to the children of country gentlemen.

That he was keen and intelligent, with a love of books far greater than any liking for athletics and outdoor sports, we can well believe. Strong and physically active as he has shown himself to be, his mental equipment, his powers of organisation, his linguistic attainments, were never gained by attention to the merely physical side of life.

At the age of thirteen, Herbert Kitchener and his brothers were sent away from home to continue their education in Switzerland, the school selected being Grand Clos, Villeneuve, a pleasant spot overlooking the blue waters of Lake Geneva. While here, their young lives were overshadowed by the loss of their mother, who died in 1864.

A year or two later Herbert, after a spell of travel, was sent into residence in London, there to be coached for entrance to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, an educational institution founded by Royal Warrant in 1741, 'for instructing the raw and inexperienced people belonging to the military branch in the several points of mathematics necessary to qualify them for the service of the artillery and the business of engineers.' The Royal Military College is the oldest military school in the country. At the date of its foundation forty cadets were entered for training in the science and art of engineering and artillery, being quartered for that purpose in the Arsenal.

Lord Kitchener belongs to the group of famous men who have never had the benefit, or otherwise, of attending a Public School. As we have seen, he was educated entirely at home till he grew up and was sent for short periods to Switzerland, and then to France and to Germany. He was not eighteen when he entered Woolwich.

CHAPTER III — TRAINING FOR A MILITARY CAREER

IN 1868 Kitchener took up his studies at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, some twenty years later than Gordon had entered the institution. Students who choose the artillery restrict their future studies to work with the guns, great or small, garrison or field. Those who go in for engineering have a wider choice. Some of them take up military engineering pure and simple, the construction of forts and strongholds; others choose the newer branches of study which the application of science to modern modes of warfare has made necessary — telegraphy, railways, photography, ballooning. Some take to the mounted branch, the train, with its bridging apparatus, while a large number — the soldier-artificers and craftsmen — are associated with the personnel. ‘A few only’ (says that well-known authority on military affairs, Major Arthur Griffiths) ‘and they may be counted on one’s fingers, have found their vocation in troop-leading, in the manipulation and command of men, whether as staff or general officers.’

Of these few Horatio Herbert Kitchener was one. Not only did he apply himself to the work before him with great diligence, but he displayed remarkable ability, and a special aptitude for it. At the end of three years’ training he left the R.M.A. and entered the Army, a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers.

Even then he did not, as so many in similar positions do, throw off studious habits. For three years longer he pursued a course of assiduous preparation for his future duties; at Chatham and at Aldershot, where much of his time was occupied with field telegraphy, he performed with unflinching regularity all the routine and practical work falling to the lot of a subaltern, utilising all the spare time, which is usually devoted to recreation, for the mastery of as many other branches of military engineering as he could accomplish.

Here he not merely learnt, but absorbed and assimilated as only one endowed with a preternatural patience could do, all the resources of the engineer — resources he afterwards put to such practical use in sapping and mining the fastnesses of the enemy; in Egypt building a railway to

penetrate the desert, and strike at the heart of the Dervishes; in South Africa carrying out a vast scheme of blockhouses to round up the Boers — always moving slowly to his objective by cold, calculating stages, and delivering his blow only when his scheme was complete and the hour had struck. Persistence and patience, patience and persistence — these are the two supreme qualities of the engineer.

While still a student at the Royal Military Academy, Herbert Kitchener had seized one of those rare opportunities for active service which sometimes fall in the way of the military aspirant. On the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, being in Dinan on a visit to his father, he offered his services to the French authorities, was accepted, and attached to the Second Army of the Loire, then under the command of the gallant Chanzy. After the revolution of September 4, Chanzy, who had risen from the ranks (he entered the army as a private in the Artillery), received from the Government of National Defence an appointment as General of Division, and in the following December took command of the Army of the Loire. His stubborn resistance of the invaders roused his countrymen to the highest pitch of enthusiasm and won for him the unstinted admiration of the Germans.

As is well known, there was not found in the French army — very greatly to the surprise of Europe — that high technical efficiency which could enable it to cope successfully with an enemy of such skill and discipline, with an army which, as is now known, had been purposely and scientifically trained for this particular encounter.

Chanzy unsuccessfully attempted to push his way northward to the relief of beleaguered Paris, but was forced to abandon the effort and withdraw his suffering and disheartened force to Le Mans.

Young Kitchener took part in several minor engagements, and made an ascent in a war balloon; but being stricken with pneumonia, was invalided home. On his return to England he renewed and completed his interrupted studies at Woolwich.

And now in the year of grace (1913), as a proof of the virility of the *entente cordiale*, and notwithstanding the unbending attitude he assumed at Fashoda, the French people are proposing that Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener shall be accorded the war medal of 1870, in acknowledgment of the strenuous services he rendered under General Jaures with the flying squadron of the Côtes-du-Nord.

CHAPTER IV — ENGAGED IN PALESTINE EXPLORATION

HAVING gathered much knowledge which a practical minded man with an active temperament would naturally desire to turn to account, and not discerning upon the horizon the least likelihood of being able to do so on the tented field of battle, Kitchener caught eagerly at an opportunity which presented itself of applying his knowledge in the peaceful pursuits, and in 1874 accepted service under the Palestine Exploration Fund.

This society was formed in 1865 for the purpose of carrying out, in a thoroughly exhaustive and scientific manner, a survey of the Holy Land, with a view to the correction and enlargement of our knowledge of the subject of Biblical sites — of the exact position of the towns and villages, the caves and rocks, and other places of interest mentioned in the Scriptures.

At that time the survey work was being carried out by two officers who belonged to the same branch of the service as Kitchener, and, a vacancy occurring on the staff, the position was offered to and accepted by him. The opening presented possibilities for gaining at least some of that practical experience of field work which he felt to be necessary, and was, therefore, an opportunity not to be missed.

And so several years were spent in mapping out the hills and valleys, groves and deserts, rivers and waters, of that little strip of territory at the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean — a country which is crowded with holy associations, and has filled the world with greater interest than any other piece of territory of the same size. Lieutenant Kitchener joined the expedition 19th November, 1874. Before the end of that month the camp had been wrecked by a storm, and he had been suitably initiated into the nature of the work.

The work of the survey party, with its measuring and plotting, and filling-in of place-names after due identification; with the more precise locating of some episode in sacred history, and with all the other customary routine of exploration, proceeded steadily month by month.

The only interruption, so far as our subject is concerned, occurred when he contracted his first fever in the March of 1875, five months after his arrival in the country. The climate is variable and uncertain, and not unfrequently rather trying to the new-comer, the weather ranging from one extreme to the other; from a sweltering heat, which, in the south, is aggravated by a parching dryness, to bitter winds which sometimes drive showers of hail and sleet before them. In the rainy season, which may begin early in November and last till the end of February, there is nothing to be done but to wrap oneself around with the garments of patience. As the opposite season is one of burning skies and drooping fields, it is not difficult to understand that crops of all kinds will fail in some years, a land of drought easily becoming a land of famine.

The photographic work, most of which was done by Lieutenant Kitchener, he executed with characteristic carefulness, giving special attention to ancient inscriptions, the worn lines of which rendered them all but illegible, thus depriving them of their interest and value. It is on record that his comrades found him, at this early period of his career, a very companionable fellow, full of life and high spirits, and as good company as any young soldier of free and hearty manners could wish to mess with; in no wise was he like the exacting officer, the austere commander, into which these latter days have developed him. Of course, as the witness to this testimony naively adds, in those days he was not in a position of high authority and immense responsibility — which may account for all the difference.

Like the others he had to rough it, for surveying work, even on a peaceful expedition of this kind, was not without its attendant discomforts and hardships, and, indeed, occasionally its risks. The work had to be carried out in the face of the most trying weather, such devotion to duty at times entailing the accompaniments of empty stomachs and wet clothes, and a liability to fever or cholera. Kitchener had his full share of sickness, suffering severely from fever during his first winter there, and being at one time attacked by snow-blindness. In December an unsuccessful attempt was made to survey the Dead Sea Desert, but the party was driven back by stormy weather, and had to go into winter quarters in Jerusalem.

Nor were these exploration experiences without an occasional spice of adventure. One hot and dusty day Lieutenant Kitchener, in company with

his comrade, Lieutenant Claude Conder, strolled down to the shore at Ascalon, and unable to resist the invitation offered by the deliciously cooling waters of the blue Mediterranean, they both stripped for a swim. Revelling in the delights of the refreshing dip, Conder struck out heedlessly, never noticing that he was being carried out by a strong current, till he found himself in the midst of dangerous-looking broken water. Kitchener, aware of the current, and knowing the unsafe nature of the coast, had kept well in to the shore. Presently seeing where his friend was, and recognising the helplessness of his position, he swam out to him, got hold of him, and with great difficulty struggled back with him to safety, an exploit calling for the display of both pluck and strength.

A more notable adventure occurred at Safed, a little town in Galilee, which had been all but destroyed by an earthquake in 1837. In the February a rapid survey had been made of the Hebron district, and on March 13th, Kitchener had rejoined the party with the heavy baggage and three more tents, the whole expedition then proceeding together to Galilee, arriving at Safed on Saturday, July 10th, 1875, where they pitched their tents under some olive trees on a piece of uncultivated ground. At that time the Mohammedan population of Palestine had not been familiarised with the sight of infidel strangers from the west, as they have been since the annual invasion of that country by Christian touring parties.

Travelling in any country ruled by the Turk is never without an element of risk for the Christian, and the remoter the territory, the greater the risk. It is, therefore, not surprising that the sudden appearance in their midst of an encampment of 'infidel dogs' should have excited the suspicions and aroused the latent antagonism of the inhabitants of Safed. It was not long before the Emir of the district, with a straggling mob in his wake, descended upon the inoffensive little camp, wearing an ugly look upon his face, and evidently bent upon mischief. Entering the tent of Lieutenant Conder, he began, in a very overbearing manner, to handle the contents with no very gentle hands, and when mildly remonstrated with by one of the servants, became even more violent, for when the owner of the property backed up his servants, he was savagely seized by the throat — an attack to which the Englishman promptly replied by knocking his assailant down. Then instantly there was more trouble, and indeed a very grave danger; for the fanatical mob, which had by this time

assembled round the tents, gave vent to savage yells, quickly followed by a more threatening demonstration, in the shape of a shower of stones and other missiles, some few shots being fired by those of the rabble who had possessed themselves of old muskets.

Fortunately all the shots went wide, but one of the stones hit Kitchener, inflicting a severe bruise on the left thigh. Both he and Conder, who were unarmed, did their utmost to pacify the howling mob, at the same time restraining their native servants, who would have taken up arms and so precipitated a deadly conflict. While Conder was thus exerting himself to prevent a violent collision, one of the infuriated fanatics suddenly rushed forward, and by a blow on the head with a heavy club, felled him to the ground. Again Kitchener was at hand, ready and alert.

‘I must inevitably have been murdered,’ said Conder in a letter he wrote home soon after the affair, ‘but for the cool and prompt assistance of Lieutenant Kitchener, who managed to get to me and engaged one of the clubmen, thereby covering my retreat. A blow descending on the top of his head, he parried with a cane which was broken by the force of the blow. A second wounded his arm. His escape is unaccountable.’

As soon as Conder could struggle to his feet, he despatched one of his attendants to the governor of the town, asking for immediate succour. ‘I saw,’ he says, ‘that the Moslems were gradually surrounding us, stealing behind trees and through vineyards, and I well understood that in such a case, unless the soldiers arrived at once, we must all die. Many of the servants had indeed already given up hope, though no one fled. I therefore gave the order to leave the tents and fly round the hill.’

Kitchener was the last to obey the order; ‘being engaged in front, he backed towards his tent, but finding that the others had abandoned the camp for a safer spot, he made after them.’ As he turned and fled, a bullet from the musket of one of the armed marauders whistled past his head. Happily it missed; but it was a narrow escape. He was not yet safe from attack, for a big fellow, armed with a formidable-looking scimitar, started in pursuit, and it was only by the aid of his long legs that Kitchener escaped the attentions of the ruffian, who managed to inflict some ugly gashes on other members of the party.

The fugitive party gathered together again, on the farther side of the hill, well out of the range of immediate danger, and were relieved soon afterwards to have the news signalled by some of their number, who had

stolen back to reconnoitre from the hill-brow, that succour was close at hand. The English Consul-agent was coming quickly to their assistance with a body of soldiers furnished by the governor. Just as suddenly as it began the disturbance was over — the mob had vanished like magic. The survey party presently returned to their encampment, though not without misgiving. No further attack was made upon them, but it was deemed prudent to strike camp and remove from the immediate neighbourhood.

The unpleasant incident that took place is thus referred to in the official publication of the Exploration Fund:—

‘The survey of Western Palestine, after three and a half years of uninterrupted work, has received a temporary check by the attack on the party at Safed. Full particulars will be found in the report partly drawn up by Lieutenant Conder, but signed and despatched during his illness by Lieutenant Kitchener. On the arrival of the intelligence the Foreign Office was at once communicated with, and no time was lost in sending instructions to Palestine.’

Shortly afterwards a move was made to Halfa, from which place a full report, including a formal complaint, was despatched to the Consul-General at Beyrout. Halfa, a name which means ‘The Haven,’ is under Mount Carmel, near where the River Kishon runs down to the sea. Three days later the party reached the sheltering walls of the monastery on Mount Carmel, where the two officers, Conder and Kitchener, had to remain for some time in order to give their evidence in support of their complaints, and secure the punishment of the ringleaders in the affray.

Rest and quiet were also necessary for the recovery of those who had been hurt in this discreditable outrage. Conder was suffering from two severe wounds on the head, and a badly swollen neck caused by a heavy blow with a blunt instrument; Kitchener was not only lame from the effects of his bruised thigh, but was further disabled by a violent blow he had received on his arm in parrying an attack with a club. Seven other wounded members of the party completed the casualty list.

Nor was the recovery of the invalids so rapid as had been at first anticipated, for in a number of cases malarial fever supervened, Kitchener having the worst bout of all. In connection with this illness a curious and amusing anecdote is related. Kitchener, fever-stricken and very feeble, lying on his pallet one sultry afternoon, caught sight of some beer on a table, and in the plaintive tones of a sick man begged one of

those standing near to give him a drink of it to cool his burning lips and moisten his parched throat.

Conder, being the senior and responsible officer, at once interposed, deprecating the indulgence of a fever patient with a beverage so unsuitable as beer. The other officer, however, was himself only a convalescent, and therefore in greater sympathy with such cravings; he, good fellow, found himself quite unable to resist the moaning appeals of the poor wretch, and against all the counsels of prudence, handed him half a glassful of the beer. The patient eagerly grabbed it, quickly drank it off, and to the alarm of his comrades at once became violently sick. But 'all's well that ends well'; Kitchener did not die, but strangely enough fell into a deep sleep, and when he awoke the fever had left him.

Though all the invalids were not fully recovered a start had presently to be made, and the journey southward was resumed in due course. It happened that when approaching Jaffa, Lieutenants Conder and Kitchener were riding alone, side by side. Suddenly the latter, still excessively weak from his recent illness, rolled out of his saddle, and fell on to the sand, where he lay insensible and apparently dying. Conder, unable to revive him, left him in the road, mounted his steed and rode hastily into the town to get help. When he returned with the requisite assistance, he was astounded to discover not the slightest trace of the comrade he had left there so short a time before. It appears that soon after the departure of the messenger for succour, Kitchener recovered consciousness, scrambled somehow into his saddle, and rode into Jaffa, where Conder presently found him in bed at the hotel, peacefully sleeping.

The trial of the offenders implicated in the outrage at Safed did not take place till the month of September, when it was held at Acre, Conder and Kitchener having to be present at most of the proceedings. The incitement was said to have come from a number of Algerine colonists. The result of the inquiry was about as satisfactory as the customary administration of justice in the East would lead one to expect. Whether the real culprits, the instigators of the outrage, were discovered may be doubted; but after the tribunal had sat for over a fortnight, sixteen of the prisoners were found guilty and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, ranging from two months to one year, in addition to which a fine of £112 was imposed on the town of Safed.

For the murderous nature of the outrage, the penalties were deemed by the Englishmen to be altogether inadequate, and a protest to this effect being lodged with the Turkish authorities, resulted in an increase in the amount of the 'damages,' and some extension of the terms of imprisonment. Eventually the sum of £270 was paid to the Exploration Fund as the amount in which the offenders had been mulcted. And there the affair ended; Lieutenants Conder and Kitchener, who had remained on the spot to further the interests of justice, being now at liberty to follow the other members of the survey party to England, gladly did so, arriving home at the close of 1875.

'The materials brought home by Lieutenants Conder and Kitchener,' says the society's report, 'are of far greater value than was expected. They consist of an addition to our map work of 1600 square miles, chiefly lying in the territory of Judah and Philistia. About 180 square miles of Lower Galilee are accomplished. There remain only some 1400 square miles to complete the map of Western Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba.'

The memoirs in the published report were compiled from the officers' field notes — those for which our subject is responsible are duly mentioned, and he is also credited with the production of fifty photographs.

A room at the Albert Hall being placed at the disposal of the Exploration Committee, Kitchener worked hard there the following year (1876) upon the new map the committee were anxious to produce, showing the important corrections and additions their efforts had enabled them to record. The work was carefully and admirably done, but as mentioned in the report, the emendations embodied related only to an area of some 1600 square miles; there yet remained an area almost as extensive, requiring expert scientific exploration. Of this survey Lieutenant Kitchener was to have sole charge, and no doubt after the close application to office work for so many months, he looked forward with pleasure to the resumption of field work, an active and energetic temperament such as his taking whatever personal risk might be involved as part of the game. Besides he was ambitious, and had already realised that the road to success, and thence to fame, lay in the direction of activities and adventures abroad; he was fully sensible of the fact that

home-keeping youths seldom, if ever, achieve distinction in the profession of arms.

It is not difficult to recognise the value of the experience Kitchener gained during the time he was in the employ of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Certain it is he never had the least cause to regret it; for then and there he obtained those opportunities for studying the Moslem character and learning the chief Moslem tongue; for gaining that insight into Oriental life and habits, propensities and prejudices, which proved of such invaluable service to him when, about twenty years later, he was called upon to do his great work for the Empire.

It is somewhat difficult to conceive how Lord Kitchener's life and destiny would have been shaped without this preliminary training in the East in the service of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Without this apprenticeship, as one may call it, without the fairly intimate knowledge of Oriental life and character thus gained, his later work in Egypt and the Sudan might never have been carried through. Indeed, he might never have had the chance of showing what he could do; and even if the opportunity had come his way, while one may believe that his policy of 'thorough' would have been applied, the results of that policy, because of his lack of knowledge of Moslem life and the principal Moslem language, would inevitably have fallen short of what he has actually achieved.

CHAPTER V — IN CHARGE OF A SURVEY PARTY

As soon, therefore, as the new year 1877 set in, Lieutenant Kitchener, having completed all his preparations, set out again for Palestine, this time in full command of the surveying party.

The final arrangements for the expedition, including the purchase of horses, were to be made at Damascus. After some unforeseen delay at Port Said, Kitchener arrived at Beyrout on February 6th. By the end of the month, the rainy season having just come to an end, the work of surveying was fairly started, notwithstanding that the Kishon, like the other rivers of that variable climate, was still in such a swollen condition as to be almost impassable.

The party consisted of four Europeans and ten natives, two Bashi-bazouk guards placed at their disposal by the Turkish Government, an equipment of five Egyptian tents, and a transport train of seven mules and seven small Arab horses. The survey was recommenced at Halfa; in March they were at Tiberias, and April 10th found them again at Safed.

From the outset disquieting rumours were brought to Kitchener as to the disturbed state of the country, a condition of things which by no means improved after the 28th April, the date war was declared between Turkey and Russia. Evidence of this was soon forthcoming in the neglected crops and the half-reaped fields, where women and feeble old men struggled to make up the deficiency in labour occasioned by the calling away of the able-bodied peasants to the seat of war.

For travellers and strangers the country was certainly less safe than usual. In the north the Druses were giving trouble, and 'cutting people's throats on the way to Damascus'; while in the south, a collision between two Arab tribes had occurred near Hebron, in which over a hundred lives had been sacrificed. The Druses, an Arab sect of strange beliefs, perhaps more political than religious, have occupied the Lebanon districts for nine hundred years, and being very united and fiercely warlike, have always given trouble.

Notwithstanding this, it is amusing to read of the ceremoniously courteous reception accorded to the party at Safed, the scene of the

villainous attack in 1875. At the approach to the town; Lieutenant Kitchener and his party were met by the Governor, the Kadi, and a number of other officials, who escorted them into the place, the guard at the Government House ('Serail') saluting as they passed. Compliments were exchanged, and the most friendly relations established. Next day the camp was visited by the Governor, the British Consul, and above all, 'our old enemy,' as Kitchener calls him, one Ali Agha Alan, who appears to have been the cause of the former hostility and the real instigator of the murderous outbreak. However, he now expressed his deep sorrow for what he had done; an altered attitude clearly traceable to the Englishmen's vigorous insistence on justice being meted out to these lawless ruffians of Safed, who, it appears, had been all but ruined by the retribution which had overtaken them.

The expedition was not entirely without its little adventures and amusing experiences. At one place the ignorant natives mistook the surveying instruments for some kind of divining rod, and the notebooks in which the entries were made as books of incantation, both employed in a search for hidden gold. In this opinion they felt themselves doubly confirmed when they saw the surveyors building the little cairns which they regularly used as points of measurement. Accordingly in the dead of night, when the encampment was wrapped in slumber, the natives stole up to the cairns, removed the stones from the spot they had covered, and proceeded cautiously to dig down in search of the hidden treasure they felt sure was located there. At each spot, they desisted only when they arrived at the solid rock — of course, without any satisfactory result. Needless to say Kitchener was not long in discovering who the delinquents were who were giving his men this unnecessary trouble; and it is easy to imagine with what grim satisfaction he insisted on the culprits rebuilding the cairns and replacing everything they had disturbed.

At Beersheba, when the work was rapidly approaching completion, the operations had to be effected in some haste; the provisions were running short, the bread being mouldy and the water very stale and discoloured. The country, too, was notoriously insecure. Owing to the evil reputation of this locality, all previous surveys of the place were more than ordinarily faulty and unreliable; a fact which naturally urged Kitchener to make unusual efforts there.

The spot was one which had to be reached by camels; and immediately after arrival, the drivers wanted to desert, or at least take their camels back while the survey was being made. It was not at all to Kitchener's taste to be stranded in that inhospitable region without the proper means of returning to civilisation immediately his object had been accomplished; so he just settled the matter in characteristic style by forcibly retaining possession of the beasts. The measure was simple, but thoroughly effective; had he not taken it he and his party might have been left to perish in the wilderness.

The return journey was marked by another incident. The party were mistaken this time, not for treasure-seekers, but for a band of robbers. The end of the first day's march brought them to some wells near El Burg, at which some men were watering their goats. The fellaheen, seeing a party of men riding towards them from the direction of the Bedouin country, hastily concluded they were about to be attacked by these marauders of the desert. So with a loud cry of 'Bedouin' they took to flight, while the goats scattered themselves over the hill-side, evidently accustomed to this manœuvre upon hearing their masters' alarm-cry. Kitchener and his companions quickly rode up to the goatherds to reassure them, but these pacific intentions were entirely misunderstood, for the men hastened all the more towards the cover of a stone wall, from the shelter of which they blazed away at the mounted party with their rusty old muskets. Balls from fifteen of these decrepit old guns began to whistle past the new-comers, but fortunately without hitting any one of them. At last it dawned upon the frightened natives that their apprehensions were groundless; explanations followed, and all was well.

Kitchener's account of this incident is followed by another record in these matter-of-fact terms: 'At Dura some boys threw stones at Corporal Sutherland, so I had them publicly whipped,' — after which the writer passes on calmly to the statistics of the survey.

At another place the inscription upon a slab was being deciphered. 'The Sheikh of the village,' writes Kitchener, 'was extremely rude, and threw stones against the inscription when I attempted to copy it. I therefore left without doing so, and reported the matter to the Governor, who immediately put the Sheikh in prison. The next time I went to the

village there was no opposition to my copying the inscription; I therefore had the Sheikh set at liberty.'

Occasionally physical discomfort had to be endured. At Nazareth a temperature of 114 degrees in the shade was encountered, and before Sidon could be reached Kitchener had a touch of sunstroke. Other unpleasant experiences of a minor character occurred — as the stoning of Kitchener in the streets of Nablus (the Shechem of the Old Testament), because, against the wishes of the local officials, he proposed to erect a wall round Jacob's Well for its better protection.

Kitchener, eminently practical though he was, and profoundly steeped in all the technical knowledge of his craft, keenly appreciated the beauties of nature. While he proudly records of his mapmaking that in one place where Murray has but seven names he gives 116, and that in Phoenicia, instead of seven villages and ruins he has located sixty-three, he is not above devoting his pen to a glowing description of any charming bit of landscape which may have engaged his eye. Thus while surveying the shores of the Sea of Galilee, after noting the monotony of the heights on the eastern side, he goes on to describe how the bright sunshine throws a rosy haze over the country, and how the contrast with the bright blue of the water produces a peculiarly beautiful colour effect. 'In the evening,' he says, 'it is particularly lovely. Deep blue shadows seem to increase the size of the hills, and there is always a rosy flush in the sky and over snow-clad Hermon.' ... In this despatch, it will be seen, official statements of fact are pleasingly illuminated by the lambent flames of artistry. To turn aside from the scale and the compasses to paint the beauties of a sunset evinces at least some tinge of romanticism in the man.

Before returning home in December, 1877, Kitchener and his party carefully examined the work of 1872, going over it again to settle a number of minor matters requiring revision. The whole of the exploration was so thorough that they closely examined and fully reported upon, not only Bible sites, but even ancient Crusading ruins.

Nothing further happened worth chronicling, and all disagreeable impressions were obliterated by the feeling of intense gratification naturally supervening upon the satisfactory conclusion of the work of the mission. By the end of September the map was completed, the survey work for which had occupied six years in all. To Lieutenant Kitchener

and the officers with him who had carried this important work to its completion, were conveyed in due form the hearty congratulations and sincere thanks of the committee.

CHAPTER VI — A SPECTATOR OF WAR

HAVING brought the Palestine survey to a conclusion, Kitchener could not refrain, on his way home, from paying a visit to the seat of the war which was then raging between Turkey and Russia. Beyond the interest a soldier naturally takes in the operations and actualities of war, Kitchener had a nearer and shrewder interest in the combatants, and in that perplexing problem for which the hereditary antagonisms of the Near East have always stood — antagonisms both racial and religious.

The Russo-Turkish War was occasioned by the detestable rule of Turkey over her subject races. Insurrections had broken out in 1876 in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Austria, Germany, and Russia united in a remonstrance to which Great Britain reluctantly assented. Then followed an insurrection in Bulgaria, suppressed by Turkey with atrocities which roused a tempest of indignation in Britain. Mr Gladstone came from his retirement to give utterance to this national outburst of feeling, and in speeches of immense weight he demanded that the Turk should be turned out of his Christian provinces, and sent away 'with bag and baggage.' The vehemence of this language caused a reaction in favour of Turkey, and Lord Beaconsfield then developed a policy of maintaining Turkey as a barrier against Russia.

Before long Serbia and Montenegro declared war against Turkey. Serbia was soon conquered, but gallant little Montenegro held out until Russia insisted on an armistice. At a Conference of the Powers at Constantinople, the influence of Great Britain strengthened the resistance of Turkey to Russian demands, and on 24th April, 1877, Russia declared war, and her armies crossed the Balkans.

The campaign was bitterly contested, but the fall of Plevna — brought about by the genius of Todleben, the defender of Sebastopol — after a siege of the most murderous character, laid open the road to Constantinople. The British fleet was promptly ordered to the Dardanelles, and Russia wisely did not insist upon going to the Turkish capital.

The excitement in this country was reflected in the popular music-hall song of the day, the burden of which was:—

*We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do,
We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too,
We've fought the Bear before, and while we're Britons true
The Russians shall not have Constantinople!*

It is not necessary here to pursue this historic episode further, except to recall that Russia gave way, and that Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury returned from the Congress at Berlin with their famous message of 'Peace with Honour'; and that Roumania, Servia, and Montenegro were made independent states. North of the Balkans was formed the tributary but self-governing state of Bulgaria, and south of the Balkans the new kingdom of Eastern Roumelia; Austria was entrusted with the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia took some Asiatic territory, and Greece had her frontiers rectified.

Lieutenant Kitchener on his arrival in England immediately put his experiences into writing, and they were published in *Blackwood's Magazine* of February, 1878, Sir Walter Besant having given him an introduction to the heads of that eminent firm. The article was entitled 'A Visit to Sophia and the Heights of Kamerleh, Christmas, 1877.'

In company with a friend 'T——,' and provided with Turkish passports, he left Constantinople on the morning of 12th December, 1877, in a train crowded with officers going to the front, some bound for Schipka, some for Sophia,, and all in excellent spirits.

'As we passed through the Checkmagee lines,' he writes, 'we could see the redoubts were garrisoned and armed ... The country between Constantinople and Adrianople looked very bare, hardly cultivated at all.' Arrived at the latter town at 9 p.m., they were unable to get hotel accommodation, and slept in the waiting-room of the station, which stands half an hour's drive away from the town. Before daybreak next morning they were off to Tatar Bazardjik, passing through a rich and highly-cultivated plain. 'The railway,' observes Kitchener, 'followed the windings of the river; in some parts it seemed perfectly absurd how the line twisted and turned when a straight course might have been easily kept.'

Curiosity being excited, an explanation was sought, and such natural inquisitiveness was amply rewarded. The railway had been contracted for

at so much a kilometre; and therefore as many kilometres as possible were got into the level land between Adrianople and Tatar Bazardjik, but beyond this, where the lesser Balkans had to be crossed, the wily contractor had found it more agreeable to his interests to pay one of the pashas a good round sum to get off this part of his contract, and, in consequence, had retired from the work with a larger amount of plunder than is usual even in that land of bakshish.

Arrived at Tatar Bazardjik they found the town in a state of siege, and no one was allowed out in the streets after dark; at nearly every street corner stood gallows which had been in full use three weeks before. Even then there was considerable fear of a Bulgarian rising in the town against the Turks. The night before, Mehemet Ali Pasha had passed through the place, returning to Constantinople on his recall from the command at Kamerleh. Every one spoke well of him, of his pluck and his sound generalship. Kitchener afterwards met him in Constantinople, and formed a good opinion of him, regretting that the jealous intrigues in the capital should have led to his ill-advised recall.

Kitchener and his travelling companion were at first refused admittance at a French hotel, Madame thinking they were Turks; but upon learning they were English, she quickly made them very welcome. Here they met Colonel Blunt, who was administering relief to refugees on behalf of the Compassionate Fund, Dr Smith of the Red Crescent Ambulance, and Temple Bey, chief of the Turkish medical staff, from whom they heard many stories of the war and the hardships they had gone through.

Next morning, after some difficulty, an *arabah*, or cart without springs, was procured in which to resume the journey, a vehicle so notoriously uncomfortable that their servant threw up his engagement rather than travel in it. Then the driver of the wretched machine absolutely refused to accept their paper money in payment, and in the end they were glad to accept a lift in one of the fifteen ambulance carts with which Dr Smith was going to the front.

‘The first three hours we got along capitally,’ wrote Lieutenant Kitchener; ‘the road then ascended to cross the lesser Balkans, and we got out and walked. When we crossed the pass the road got much worse; steep ascents and descents, and everywhere foot deep in heavy mud. We managed to get our cart along, but the rest of the ambulance was left

behind. After a long march we reached the plain of Ichtiman, and got into the village at 9.30 p.m. With some difficulty we were admitted to the inn, where a Bulgarian boy seemed to be the only inhabitant. We managed to get some chickens and eggs, and having cooked our own dinner, prepared one for Smith — who did not get in till 1.30 a.m.’

During the delay which occurred here they saw several parties of Circassian irregulars passing through the village. ‘They have,’ says Kitchener, ‘the most extraordinary turn-outs. Mounted on little shaggy ponies, with all their worldly goods tied on in front and behind, they ride about the country looting. They only obey their own chiefs and have very little discipline. Their ordinary plan is to go to a quiet Bulgarian village and say:— “What are you doing here? Are you not aware the Russians are close at hand?” A panic ensues and the people decamp; the Circassians then loot the village.’ Kitchener credits them with little pluck, and stigmatises them as inveterate horse-stealers.

Nor is Kitchener’s impression of the Bulgarians more favourable. ‘They seem to be a most despicable race. Morally they appear to be at the lowest ebb.’

Pushing on, the travellers arrived at the village of Vakerell, beyond which the road led down to the plain of Sofia, which at that time was aptly and tersely described as a ‘filthy hole.’ As they neared the town it was freezing hard and snowing, and the sympathy of the travellers naturally went out to a convoy of wounded soldiers being jolted over the terrible roads in bullock-wagons, and scarcely covered by the few blankets the Compassionate Fund had been able to serve out to them.

At Sofia they put up at Sebastian’s Hotel, where they met a number of doctors of the Red Crescent, and the Stafford House committee. They found Lady Strangford’s hospital doing good service in the town, and also Mr Master’s soup kitchen, maintained by the Compassionate Fund; moreover, everyone seemed really grateful for the good work done by these English agencies.

Kitchener’s description of Sofia, ‘the third town of importance in European Turkey/ does not present a very attractive picture:—

‘Situated in a broad plain of wonderfully fertile soil, with a very healthy climate, it is said that in Sofia there is nothing to be desired. There are natural warm sulphur-baths, which are supposed to be very good for rheumatism, and in the hills around I was told there were silver,

iron, and coal mines. The town had not the appearance of a very prosperous place. Most of the houses were built of mud and wood, though there were some good stone houses. The streets are broad, and, as in all Bulgarian towns, quite two feet deep in mud everywhere; I never saw anything to equal the mud and filth. The fortifications are some distance outside the town, and were composed of detached redoubts of no great strength; still, if these had been armed and defended, Sofia might have held out for some time.'

Having purchased for five pounds (Turkish) a very good little horse, with an English saddle and bridle included, the two rode out of Sofia on December 20, and reached Tashkessen, a small straggling Bulgarian village about an hour's ride from the positions occupied by the army of Kamerleh. Here they managed to get a room in a Bulgarian house, and made themselves as comfortable as possible on the floor, with a very limited amount of straw. Some of the Red Crescent doctors having also taken up their quarters here, they all messed together.

The weather was now very severe, a cold, cutting wind seeming to penetrate everything. Each day that Lieutenant Kitchener rode up to the positions he encountered frost-bitten soldiers staggering along the road, tearing off their clothes in delirium, and falling by the wayside. Although a cart occasionally picked up the worst cases and took them into hospital at Tashkessen, the appearance of the road grew worse every day till, towards the end, it was almost paved with dead carcasses and broken carts.

'Some poor soldiers of the Arab battalions, who had come from the warm climate of Palestine, could not understand how they were to lose their hands and feet by the cold. They appeared quite delighted to hear me talk to them in Arabic; but though in great pain, all they seemed to care to talk about were the beautiful gardens of Jaffa, where there was always a warm sun, and oranges and tomatoes for all, however poor.'

One of the Turkish divisions was under the command of Baker Pasha — Colonel Valentine Baker of the British army, and brother to Sir Samuel Baker, the explorer. Nothing was more natural than that Lieutenant Kitchener and his companion should pay the English commander a visit. The two visitors climbed the hills occupied by this division, on foot, a stiffish task over a slippery road of ice and snow, especially when clad in heavy furs. As they were going along, the alert

and active soldier noticed that his companion's ear was white, as if frost-bitten, whereupon he immediately rubbed it liberally with snow, and then bandaged it so effectively that no lasting harm came of the attack.

Some of the regiments occupied huts, made from branches of trees and then covered with snow. The men appeared cheerful, though their greatcoats were too thin for the intense cold. All of them had their heads carefully bandaged up for protection against the cold.

Kitchener observes that:— 'There was a marked difference between the Arab and the Bosnian battalions. The former appeared shrivelled up and scarcely capable of moving, whilst the latter were lively and working to make their huts more comfortable.'

'Baker Pasha,' he writes again, 'is the only general who has looked after the interior economy and sanitary arrangements of his men, and his division's camps are in striking contrast to those of the rest of the army.'

'The men are very fond of the Inglese Pasha, as they call him, and have thorough confidence in him. A little artillery officer, an enthusiastic admirer of the Pasha, told me several stories of his and Colonel Alex's coolness under fire. He pointed out a very warm place in one of the batteries where the Pasha had stopped for some time while the shells were coming thick about him; one lodged in the edge of the parapet about two feet from the general, who never moved, but went on giving his directions. Close by he showed me where a shell had burst over Colonel Alex's head, killing men right and left of him, but leaving him unscathed, smiling, and as cool as ever. He thought the English had a charm.'

The visitors found Baker in a little bell-tent, half smothered in snow like all the rest. He took them round several of the batteries and redoubts, pointing out the improvements he had made in the defences since he had been in command. Colonel Alex and a Turkish colonel were all the help he had been given, and he was in great need of engineer officers and a proper staff.

Then Kitchener, the professional soldier, launches into the following critical description of what he saw on that occasion — a description which gathers added interest when we know that Plevna, after one of the most obstinate defences on record made by the gallant Osman Pasha, had fallen on December 10, though the news as yet had been kept back from the army:—

‘The position was a very strong one on the top of a narrow ridge, with steep slopes running nearly east and west, cutting the Orchanie road at right angles. It was the last foothold on the Balkans behind open country. The whole line was about three miles long, and the Orchanie road came through the centre, or nearly so, of the position. It was a sad pity that, in taking up these lines, the Turks had neglected to occupy a high hill-top on the extreme left front; this would have rendered the turning of the left almost an impossibility. The Russians saw the advantage of this position, and occupied it at once; their guns almost enfiladed the Turkish lines from this point. The whole lines were defended by eight well-constructed batteries and redoubts, besides gun-pits placed in advantageous sites, all armed with Krupp’s field-guns. The whole force defending them was, I believe, between 15,000 and 20,000 men. On the left the Russians were causing some anxiety, as they had worked their way up on to a spur that ran down from the ridge through a wood, and the sentries were barely 100 yards apart. General Baker wished very much to drive them out of this position without delay.

‘On the right Chakir Pasha commanded here. The lines were carried along the mountain-side till they ended in the Yeldis or Star redoubt, perched on the top of a pointed mountain 6200 feet above the level of the sea, and 2300 above the other redoubts. It must have been an immense labour getting the guns up the steep sides of the mountain. We found some difficulty in getting up ourselves. It took two hours’ climbing, but we were well repaid; the view from the Yeldis was magnificent. The snow-clad Balkans, in successive crags and peaks and wooded valleys, led away as far as the eyes could reach. The sun threw a rosy tinge over all, making the most perfect scene imaginable. But we did not stop long to look at the beauties of nature. There were the Russians just below us in their trenches. We could see them relieving guard, and they could easily have been picked off with a rifle; this, however, was not allowed, as it raised a return fire, and then the whole line would blaze out to show they were ready.’

Lieutenant Kitchener says he came away with the impression that the Russians could never attack the right of the position, but that under cover of the fog the turning of the left was then steadily going on. ‘On the 24th,’ he writes, ‘General Baker made a reconnaissance on the left to see how far the Russians had been able to get in the foggy weather. He

passed through Tashkessen early, having left his camp before daybreak. I was obliged to go to Strigel to meet Captain Fife, the military *attaché*. Strigel was another little village on the edge of the hills to the right. Captain Burnaby had taken up his quarters there, and Colonel Baker, V.C., was also in the village very ill with dysentery.

‘I heard some firing going on on the left, and in the evening General Baker came in and dined with us. They had made the Russians show themselves, and had seen all they required. The General considered that matters in this position of the field were getting serious, and deplored that something had not been done early to stop the Russian advance in this direction.’

With this interesting note, the military observations of the future Field-Marshal practically come to an end. Next morning, Christmas Day, he departed for Constantinople, leaving his friend, ‘T——,’ behind. ‘Poor fellow! he was caught by the Russians two days later, when they at last advanced on Tashkessen.’

Kitchener rode into Sofia by himself without any mishap, and sat down that evening to a large dinner in the hotel, organised by the English doctors, where he had a very pleasant time, notwithstanding that ‘the attempt at a plum-pudding resembled a poultice more than anything else.’

He pays a compliment to the devotion of the English doctors, and a higher one to the fighting qualities of the Turkish soldier.

‘Always ready to fight, they are perfect heroes,’ says Kitchener; ‘never conquered except by overpowering numbers, their motto might well be “While we have life we will fight.”’

The rest of the return journey to Constantinople was almost without incident, except that he was nearly stranded at Tatar Bazardjik, where he found to his consternation that all the trains had been made military, and that no one not in uniform was allowed to pass.

What was to be done in these untoward circumstances? He soon decided. The resourceful lieutenant went to the railway station very early in the morning, presumably while it was yet dark, and got into a first-class carriage, and there ‘lay *perdu*.’ It is uncertain whether by this phrase he means to convey that he got under the seat; but he tells us he waited there three hours before the train made a start; that at Tirnova, where the line branches to Yamboli, he was prepared to throw out his

baggage and jump if the train were shunted into the branch. However, he was right for Adrianople, where he arrived safely at 1 a.m.

And there ends the article, signed 'H. H. K.,' from which the interest has not faded yet, though it was written in 1878 — the personality of the writer having conferred upon it the antidote to transiency.

CHAPTER VII — THE CARTOGRAPHER OF CYPRUS

THE whole of the survey of Galilee was executed by Kitchener; then followed the work of collating all the material amassed during the progress of the survey, and of arranging and editing it for publication. This also was entrusted to him and Lieutenant Conder, and practically occupied the whole of their time during the greater part of 1878. From January to September of that year, in a room specially provided at the South Kensington Museum, Kitchener and his companion applied themselves diligently to the close office work necessary to the production of the complete map of Western Palestine, which the committee, in the fulfilment of their scheme, had announced and were anxious to get out.

The map was issued on a scale of one inch to the mile, 'with every town, village, ruin, tell, wady, hill, and plantation marked upon it.' A 'tell,' it may be explained, is the Arabic name for a mound, especially one covering ruins; a 'wady' is another native topographical term standing for a water-course, dry in summer, but occasionally filled with water in the winter.

The achievement — having regard perhaps more to the field work than to the draftsmanship — was no mean one; and as it happened that the Government were in need of a man to undertake a similar commission, it is not surprising to find Lieutenant Kitchener selected to survey the island of Cyprus, just then assigned to us by the Berlin Congress, which had met to settle the affairs of the Near East at the conclusion of the war between Turkey and Russia.

The acquisition of Cyprus by this country was not the least sensational of the many startling provisions contained in the Treaty of Berlin. Then, by a convention signed at Constantinople, a defensive alliance was entered into between Great Britain and Turkey, decreeing that so long as the towns and fortresses in Asia, seized by Russia were held by that power, Great Britain should occupy Cyprus; and if further aggression were attempted by the Russians, Britain should assist Turkey in repelling it by force of arms. That Turkey should suffer no loss of revenue by the bargain, it was also agreed that we should make good to the Porte the

sum by which the revenue of the island at that time exceeded its expenditure, a concession equivalent to a subsidy of about £90,000 a year.

It may be mentioned here that no surplus revenue ever did find its way into the Turkish treasury, but was 'retained as part payment of the loss sustained by England and France in paying the deficiency on the guaranteed Turkish loan of 1855,' as it was expressed in the language of diplomacy.

The strategical value of Cyprus to this country may have been regarded as a sufficient consideration for its acquisition when the golden opportunity thus offered itself; for at that time, be it remembered, Egypt had not yet become a British Protectorate, and the situation of the island probably presented itself to many minds in the light of another desirable station and foothold on the way to India. It would certainly constitute a base for us conveniently near to the Sultan's dominions if ever we were called upon to defend them.

In due course British troops were moved into Cyprus; Sir Garnet Wolseley took up his residence there as Governor of the island; and, as previously noted, Lieutenant Kitchener, of the Royal Engineers, was entrusted with the making of a complete scientific survey of our newly-acquired possession. Wolseley, it may be noted, was sent *to administer* this new addition to the Empire, and Kitchener *to take stock* of it.

In September, 1878, Kitchener left England to undertake his new duties in the imperial service. What he thought of the appointment, and what new vista was opened out to him by it, may best be gathered from the next chapter.

Cyprus, it was at first proposed, should be garrisoned by 10,000 British troops, of whom 7000 were to be natives of India; but the climate was found treacherous, and the number was reduced to less than 1000. The whole scheme was a muddle, and Wolseley said he doubted whether he served the Queen or the Sultan. From the first many at the wisest heads were sceptical as to the new possession being of any real and permanent value to the Empire.

Cyprus is a triangular island, a hundred and forty miles from east to west, with an average breadth of about thirty miles. Its story is extremely varied, ranging through ancient history, both classical and sacred, and figuring with equal prominence throughout the Middle Ages.

It was colonised by the Phoenicians at a very early period, and Greek colonies were planted, according to tradition, soon after the Trojan War. It has owed allegiance to Assyria and to Egypt, has been subject to the Persians, and was a Roman province. By turn it has been ruled by Byzantine, Saracen, and Venetian; and in feudal times it once, for a brief space, became an appanage of the English crown, when Richard Coeur de Lion, on his way to the Crusades, vanquished its tyrant emperor, Isaac. Since 1200 B.C. it has successively been in the hands of the dominant power in the East Mediterranean, and will now presumably remain British till such time as Russia shall think fit to restore Batoum, Ardahan, and Kars to Turkey.

Geographically it is a land of rugged mountains and malarial marsh, of scattered villages and classical ruins; deficient in good harbours, and all its rivers mere mountain torrents, mostly dry in summer. There is certainly one passable harbour, Famagosta, but it is one of the unhealthiest spots on the island. The antiquities, which are of Grecian, Roman, and Christian origin, constitute the chief and, to most visitors, the only attraction of the place.

To an educated man like Kitchener the work of surveying this ancient island was doubtless as full of interest as had been his task in the Holy Land, though in some respects he found the conditions of his labour were different. He was still menaced by lurking malaria, and was often entirely dependent upon his own resources, in that backward and impoverished country, for a regular supply of food and other necessities. But he was now in the Imperial service, and working in the security generally vouchsafed by the presence of the British flag.

Everywhere were dirt, poverty, and neglect; on every hand the eye encountered nothing but signs of stagnation, if not of actual decay. No harbour works had been attempted, and none of the roads had been properly constructed. The blight of Turkish ineptitude and misrule was everywhere in painful evidence.

Here was scope indeed for the work of the constructive engineer; here was a lamentable state of things to be remedied without delay by a government of proper enterprise. It was Kitchener's duty to note, to record, and to report. Harbour and dock works, roads and railways, drainage and irrigation — all these things came well within his purview, to suggest, and perhaps to recommend, if called upon. One task he was

requested to undertake which he certainly found congenial to his tastes as a reformer — the inauguration and establishment of a system of land registration.

How necessary was this reform appears from the investigations of Sir Samuel Baker, the redoubtable African traveller, who made a purposeful visit to the island at this period. Under the old Cypriote system the encroachments of landowners were frequent and extensive, because so easily perpetrated. Title-deeds were loosely worded, officials were easily bribed, and consequently land-grabbing was extremely rife. Usually public land was filched, though private property occasionally suffered where boundaries were so indefinite and justice so hard to procure. Kitchener's task, it will be seen, was no light one, his first duty being to organise the courts. He had to formulate a complete system of land registration suitable to circumstances, and to provide proper machinery for carrying it into effect. At the inauguration of a reform so sweeping in its effects, there were naturally innumerable preliminary difficulties either to be overcome or removed.

Writing on this subject in his authoritative work, *Cyprus as I saw it in 1879*, Sir Samuel Baker says:— 'When the intention of the British occupation was made public, a general rush was made for obtaining an excess over the amount defined in the title-deeds by the swindling method; and the extent to which this plunder was carried may be imagined from the fact that forty thousand such documents were awaiting the necessary signatures when, by the arrival of the British officials, the Turkish authority, who could not sign the deeds with sufficient expedition, was dismissed, and the false titles were invalidated.'

Kitchener promptly organised and set to work the necessary courts; upon the operation of which the ownership of all land was systematically registered, with its boundaries, its rights, and responsibilities so clearly defined that disputes and lawsuits became well-nigh impossible. After so long a reign of injustice and corruption the reform was as complete as it was welcome, and gave perfect satisfaction to Mussulman and Christian alike. By this service, so admirably and successfully carried out, Lieutenant Kitchener attracted the notice of Lord Derby, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who expressed his pleasure and gratification at the

way this capable young officer had carried out the difficult and delicate work entrusted to him.

We obtain a glimpse of him at work from Sir Samuel Baker's volume. 'Mr Kitchener, lieutenant of the Royal Engineers,' he writes at the beginning of his book, 'called at our camp, and was kind enough to pilot us to the celebrated springs about a mile above the village. This able and energetic officer was engaged with Mr Hippersly of the same corps in making the trigonometrical survey of the island.' The veteran explorer acknowledges how useful he found Kitchener's services as a guide on this occasion.

The survey work was interrupted between 1879 and 1881 by Kitchener's absence from the island on another service. But on its resumption the work was carried through without further delay to its final completion; with the result that in 1885 there was published an excellent and thoroughly reliable map of Cyprus, the painstaking work of Lieutenant Kitchener, and bearing the imprimatur of the British Government.

It thus comes about that the standard map of Cyprus — which island though nominally Turkish has been under British administration since 1878, and has recently petitioned the Colonial Secretary for permission to unite with Greece — is the work of the most prominent military engineer in His Britannic Majesty's forces.

The occasion for suspending the work of the Cyprus survey so long had been Kitchener's unexpected appointment to a consular post. Sir Charles Wilson, of the Royal Engineers, having been appointed British Consul-General in Anatolia, chose his capable young comrade, Lieutenant Kitchener, to be Vice-Consul at Erzeroum, whereupon he at once crossed to the mainland of Asia Minor to take up these new duties.

Erzeroum was evacuated by the Turks in February, 1878, but the definitive treaty of peace between Turkey and Russia was not signed till the February of the following year, and the distress occasioned by the war lasted a considerable time.

At Erzeroum he was again brought into actual contact with the awful effects of war, its devastations, and other attendant miseries. In the terrible struggle between Turkey and Russia, the tide of war had here rolled up almost to the very doors, and the district of which Erzeroum was the centre was overrun by fugitives flying for safety from the sound

of the Russian guns, carrying with them what little of their property it was possible to save from the general ruin. Crowds of these wretched fugitives, ragged and starving, poured into Erzeroum and the country round about it; the women and children scared, tired, and not a few of them sick; the men sullen, desperate and dangerous; and it became Kitchener's duty to make arrangements for the reception of this helpless, war-stricken crowd, to provide them with food and lodging, and to preserve order amongst them. The task was one eminently suited to the character and capacity of the man; and with what vigour he set about it, and with what complete success he accomplished it, scarcely needs the telling here. He evolved orderliness out of chaos, at the same time neglecting no opportunity of studying many of the varied types of Mohammedan life — an experience which stood him in good stead a few years later. In 1881 he returned to Cyprus, there to resume the duties which had been thus temporarily interrupted.

CHAPTER VIII — 'NOTES FROM CYPRUS'

UNDER this title we have another of Kitchener's incursions into literature — they were 'Notes' published in the August number of *Blackwood's Magazine*, 1879. The season of the year in which the notes were written is revealed in the text:— 'The harvests are now being reaped, and it is pitiful to see the poor women pulling up the thin stalks of barley, only nine inches long in most cases, where in former years the sickle cut down thick crops.'

The article begins with a word-picture of the place:— 'Cyprus is an island of sudden changes. Both climate and landscape are subject to rapid variations. From the glare of an overpowering sun one may enter the cool shade of a tropical garden, with the murmur of water trickling past as it wanders amongst the groves of oranges, figs, and palms. The bare treeless plain may be changed in a very short space for pine-forests of magnificent trees; instead of sand and dust, we trample on bracken fern by the side of rills and torrents running in steep gorges. The climate changes from great heat to chilling cold. We have noted a daily variation of fifty degrees of temperature; after a calm, clear morning, with the distant hills apparently close, suddenly a windy hurricane, accompanied by a thick haze, comes over the island, and shuts out the view. In the landscape it is the same. There are no gentle slopes; the hills all rise steeply from the plains; the watercourses run in deep beds, cut through alluvial soil and rock. These signs show the island to have been visited by heavy tropical rains. After the winter of 1877 the great Messarea plain was a lake of water and slime. This winter there has been barely five inches of rainfall — hardly enough to make the roads muddy for a few hours.'

The writer then makes the reference to the poor harvest (already quoted) which, he says, synchronises with a comparative freedom from fever, whereas the hot years are usually accompanied by good harvests and the prevalence of fever.

The resources of the island, if properly developed, he believes might be very great; the soil is fertile, but needs a system of irrigation to combat

the hot sirocco winds that blow from the east. On the plain, water is found almost everywhere at about twenty feet below the surface, while springs and rivulets are allowed to run to waste. 'A few windmill pumps,' says our authority, 'would irrigate a farm sufficiently to make it independent of the lack of rainfall.'

Though Kitchener's descriptive powers unmistakably reveal a keen appreciation of the beautiful, here is a touch of utilitarianism:—

'The hill slopes grow vines in profusion, and these vineyards might be greatly extended. Many beautiful spots exist amongst the hills lying completely waste, grown over with scrub, hiding the old rock-cut wine-presses, that show where in ancient times there were once fruitful vineyards. Had the island been taken over by France instead of England, the French would have soon developed the wine trade enormously. All that is wanted is capital to clear the scrub and plant the vines.'

He then gives the area, value, and other statistical details of an estate which illustrates his point, quite in the commercial spirit which recalls his father's enterprising agrarian ventures in Ireland.

After going into the great possibilities of wine production in Cyprus, he touches upon the opening presented there for a larger cultivation of cereals, cotton, and tobacco — 'all that is required is enterprise and capital,' he declares.

Then, as a surveyor and engineer, his attention is drawn to the important question of internal communication:—

'Roads are a great want in the development of the island. The natives have no desire to save time — they follow the same narrow rugged tracks up and down the rocks that their fathers followed before them, and if Government undertook to make roads for them, they would soon be again destroyed; but this would change if a few Englishmen settled in the country. The same thing would happen as has happened in the Lebanon. The English colony goes up from Beyrout to some village in the hills for the summer months: a road where there was none before is soon made by the natives; the houses are improved; rents rise; a hotel is started; and a thriving active community takes the place of a torpid village. The same effect would happen if a few colonists arrived in Cyprus.'

The two races who inhabit the country are then contrasted. The Turks are tall, well-built men, generally spare and active, distinguished from the Greeks by their proud bearing. They work well, though less

submissive under reproof, and are not at all fanatical about their religion. 'It is rare to find the Turks inhospitable; they are generally very obliging at first. For instance,' says Kitchener, 'I have been told at a village that everything would be provided for nothing; that I must accept their hospitality, not only in words of politeness, but really intending that I should live on them. After refusing such offers, it is strange to be cheated in the price of barley and chickens; but it is Turkish and Oriental.'

'The Greeks also,' continues Kitchener, 'are fine-made men, but of a milder and more humble temperament. They hide in the villages as a Government official passes through, *without any real cause*.' That's as may be, Lieutenant Kitchener — other observers may not find it difficult to discover the existence of a 'cause,' though it be a remote one.

The Greeks are 'very religious, generally going to church every evening and keeping a great number of saints' days, and believing every superstitious story. They are stupid, and are bad workers, shirking as much as they can. They like a shilling a day, but after two or three days they are all inclined to strike with three shillings. They are rich enough to lie in the sun and do nothing for a long time; and they object to working when they become such capitalists. There are bright exceptions to this rule — energetic Greeks who are better sometimes than stupid Turks; but the great test of stamina, the keeping at continual steady work, breaks them all down. They are not nearly so intelligent or such good workers as the Maronites and Druses of the Lebanon.'

In the eyes of this critical young celibate the women of both races are not considered to be prepossessing; nay, it is a positive advantage that the Turkish women veil their faces. But then the women of Cyprus do much of the laborious work, fetching water, helping in the reaping of the harvest and the threshing of the corn. In the fields two women to one man may generally be seen working together.

The landowning system is next brought under review. The Turkish proprietor, generally styled Effendi, lives a retired life in the village; the Greek landowner generally prefers to live in the town. A considerable amount of land is held by the Greek monasteries; the mosques and Mahommedan charities also hold considerable quantities of what is called 'vakuf' land, bequeathed to them by worthy Moslems — not unfrequently to escape the loss of it in a doubtful lawsuit.

There are some small holdings held by peasant proprietors which at the holder's decease are divided and sub-divided, till a quarter of an acre sometimes belongs to four or five brothers. Women, though incapable of inheriting land, often inherit the trees upon the land — someone else's land!

A Turk very rarely marries a Greek girl, and the reverse never happens. For though Turks and Greeks live together in the same village all their lives, they associate with each other but very little. The Turkish houses are in one part of the village, and the Greek in another.

Beyond these two races, Kitchener notes various types of others — traces of Egyptian, Crusading, and German blood, all of them strongly intermixed with the Greek element; and in the northwest corner of the island he found a colony of Maronites, settlers from the Lebanon, still maintaining their religion, though using the Greek language instead of their own.

After describing the dwellings and buildings of the place, some brief notice is given to the costume of the natives. Then we have a passage tintured with the self-complacent patriotism every Englishman carries abroad with him:—

‘The English rule is undoubtedly popular in Cyprus. The Greeks are naturally more enthusiastic than the Turks in their expression of devotion to the Government of the Queen. For instance, in the village of Kethrœa on New Year's eve, while the clocks were chiming the advent of another year, shouts and cheers for Victoria and the English woke us up. No English were with them, and the shouting was quite spontaneous.

‘The Turks are also pleased with the new rule. They are not worried by *zabtiehs*, they have no fear of conscription, and they rather like the English.’

Then follows a very readable and informative topographical description of the island, after which we have Kitchener's view on the political and military aspect of this newly-acquired possession. The following passage gives an insight into the working of his mind, and sometimes it may be found to be pregnant with meaning:—

‘We have had our eyes on Cyprus as a desirable position for some time. As early as October, 1876, it appears something had been decided, for the innumerable and very bad maps of the island issued on linen from the War Office are all stamped with that date. Palestine, no doubt, was

the great rival, had war broken out with Russia. We might have occupied the country which we must defend from invasion from the north; we might have constructed the works that would make the passes of the Lebanon inaccessible, and have prepared the position about Mount Carmel, the greatest battlefield of the world, for the final contest.

‘Directly “Peace with honour” prevailed, Cyprus carried the day. We know the advantages of a sea-girt shore. No complications of holy sites and sentimental interests, no religious task of sending the Jew back and placing a king on the throne of Judah, tend to embarrass our occupation of the island.

‘The position of Cyprus was clearly seen to be almost perfect as a base of operations in Syria, and for influencing the reforms in Asia Minor.

‘So we have come to Cyprus, and some are horribly disgusted because it is not the seventh heaven promised by Mohammed to true believers. Had we been only looking for a charming climate, a delightful and healthy country, rich and prosperous, capable of paying us well for taking possession of it, there is no doubt we might have chosen something nearer the Garden of Eden; but we should have been no better than freebooters, looting from the weak the richest jewels we could get hold of.

‘The great reasons for our coming should not be lost sight of — to influence the Turkish rule in Asia Minor for good, and to be capable of resisting any further encroachments from the north. Unless we see reforms carried out in Asia Minor, how can we answer the great Christian deliverer when he advances to lift the yoke from suffering Christians? We may know that the Muscovite yoke is twice as heavy as the Ottoman; still, fanatical Christians, as all Christians are in the East, will prefer a heavy yoke put on by a master of their own faith, rather than a lighter burden imposed by the infidel Moslem.

‘The army of those who are to be our future allies should also be attended to. We know what splendid fighting material there is in the Turkish soldier. We also know their wants — good officers, discipline, and commissariat. By raising and maintaining a Turkish regiment in Cyprus, we could find out by experience the reforms necessary. It would become the training school for officers, who would be capable of carrying out the same reforms in Asia Minor; and in case of war, we

should have men able to raise troops amongst the many warlike tribes of Syria and Asia Minor who would follow an English leader to the death.

‘By thus employing Cyprus we should make its possession politically of the vastest importance, and we should really possess the key of the East.’

Although the article is not signed, but merely dated from ‘Camp Levkouiko, Cyprus/ we have here Kitchener’s deliberately stated opinions on the problem of the Near East, or at least one phase of it. Or, more correctly, we have these views of his young and callow days — whether those views remain the same in his maturer years, when the weight of an enormous responsibility attaches to them, who shall say?

CHAPTER IX — ADVENT INTO EGYPT

ALREADY Kitchener's destiny appeared to be very largely shaping itself amongst those Eastern lands which had been the scenes of the civilisations of antiquity. In 1882 he found himself in Alexandria at a period of intense political excitement, having arrived there from Cyprus on furlough.

The murderous attack upon Europeans in that city, for which Arabi Pasha, leader of the Egyptian Nationalist movement, was responsible, had determined the British Government to intervene without further hesitation, and take immediate action for the restoration of the Khedival authority and the suppression of all civil and military disorders. The British fleet was outside the harbour, and might open fire at any moment.

Consequently the city of Alexandria was all excitement and expectancy. Lieutenant Kitchener, like others similarly situated, was feverishly anxious to take a hand in the coming struggle; for if a bombardment were imminent, fighting was sure to follow, and where is the young soldier who does not long to look on 'battle's magnificently stern array'? Already he had obtained one extension to his furlough, and was prepared to risk overstaying his leave if there was any possibility of being accepted for active service.

All his life he has been *par excellence* a volunteer, offering himself again and again for any difficult or dangerous duty to which he felt himself impelled, and for which he believed he possessed an aptitude. An enthusiast in arms, daring and resourceful, he unites in himself the subtle skill of the sapper with the dash of the trooper, a combination that goes far to make a successful soldier.

Arabi, as prime minister and head of the Egyptian army, had greatly strengthened the defences, and filled the city with troops; nor was he in the least deterred from these efforts when the guns of our Mediterranean fleet were trained on the forts. The warships of various powers were congregated in the harbour, but when the supreme moment came it was left for the British force to act alone, even France, whose co-operation had been expected, declining to join us in administering a castigation to

the refractory Egyptians. Great Britain made the sacrifice and, as a consequence, afterwards reaped whatever reward or responsibility was to be had. The bombardment of Alexandria was a momentous event in the history of our relations with the East — it was the first and irrevocable step which took us into Egypt, either for good or for evil. The events which led up to this culmination may be briefly summarised.

Egypt, sharing in the decline of its suzerain, Turkey, had for years been drifting towards bankruptcy. When the reckless and extravagant Ismail came to the Khedival throne in 1863, the national debt was only three millions sterling; by 1876 it had grown to eighty-nine millions, and the burden of taxation was grinding the country to powder. In the meantime Egypt had become the prey of hosts of foreign speculators and concessionaires; and as the Government became more dependent on foreign money, the concessions, or ‘capitulations’ as they were called, became more and more serious in extent.

One result of this disgraceful state of things was the institution of Mixed Tribunals, the setting up of international courts composed of natives and foreigners for the hearing of all causes brought by foreigners — a complacent surrender to the demands of those rapacious outlanders, which enabled them to suck the life’s blood of the country with more freedom than ever. Egyptian finances became so hopelessly involved that in June, 1879, Ismail Pasha was deposed by the Western Powers, and Prince Tewfik, his eldest son, was proclaimed Khedive. The Dual Control of Great Britain and France was then set up, Major Baring (now Lord Cromer) representing this country, and M. de Blignières acting in the interests of France.

When France declined to take part with us in the bombardment, her action may have been an informal recognition of the fact that our share in the interests involved was much greater than hers. The Suez Canal on the new high road to India, was a factor of no little importance in any solution to the Egyptian difficulty; and our concern in that particular factor had been intensified when, in November, 1875, the British Government had purchased from the thriftless Ismail his interest in that undertaking, consisting of 176,602 shares, for the sum of four millions sterling. It was under these untoward circumstances that Arabi, excusably enough, had formed his Nationalist Party of patriotic

Egyptians who desired to shake themselves free of all foreign interference.

To put down this 'revolt' the British fleet bombarded Alexandria. The forts were demolished by the fire of British guns, and subsequently Arabi Pasha was defeated in the field by Sir Garnet Wolseley at Tel-el-Kebir. A few other sharp encounters took place in the desert country, that at Kassassin on 28th August being memorable for the charge of our heavy cavalry in the darkness. Sir Garnet pushed on to Cairo, and established British authority in Egypt, the young Khedive making his formal entry into the capital with British redcoats lining the streets, 25th September.

Our immediate object was accomplished, and some twelve thousand British troops were ordered to remain in occupation. Arabi fell into our hands and, after trial, was exiled to Ceylon.

It was certainly a very happy accident by which Lieutenant Kitchener found himself in Egypt at this momentous crisis in its history — a crisis which formed a prelude to the remarkable and long-drawn-out historical drama about to be played in the theatre of the Nile Valley, and in which fate ordained he should come to play the leading part.

He had passed through the ordinary routine of military training without attracting the attention of his comrades or his instructors either by prowess in athletics or by promise in study. For the first ten years of his military service he remained an obscure officer, performing his duties with commendable regularity but evincing little or none of that talent he was afterwards to display.

But Herbert Kitchener had the power of waiting, and he neglected no opportunity. For six years the advantage of knowing Arabic had brought him no profit, but with the British fleet menacing Alexandria, and the certainty of complications in Egypt to follow, he knew the time was ripe. Securing leave of absence, he hurried to the scene of crisis. His precious leave was slowly exhausted by the tantalising delays preceding the actual outbreak of hostilities. He asked and obtained an extension of leave, but still the political climax hung fire. All British residents in Alexandria were ordered to quit the city, and seek their own safety by at once embarking; among the last to leave before the guns opened fire was Lieutenant Kitchener.

On board a steamer in the harbour the eager young officer seriously meditated disobedience by breaking his leave. Irresolute, a last chance

presented itself to his mind — he would telegraph for a further extension. What happened next is tersely recorded in that admirable work on the reconquest of the Sudan by Mr Winston S. Churchill, entitled *The River War*:— ‘He felt that it would be refused, and it was at the suggestion of a newspaper correspondent that he added that he would assume it granted unless he was recalled by telegraph. The telegram came with promptness, but it fell into the hands of the friendly newspaper correspondent, who did not manage to deliver it until the weekly Cyprus mail had left, and compliance with its orders was for the time being impossible. Thus a week was gained. Much might happen before the week was out. Four days later Alexandria was bombarded. Detachments from the fleet were landed to restore order. The British Government decided to send an army to Egypt. British officers and soldiers were badly wanted at the seat of war; an officer who could speak Arabic was indispensable.

‘It was thus Kitchener came to Egypt and set his feet firmly on the high road to fortune.’

The writer, after recording this, cannot forbear moralising on the irony of the situation — that the bitterest opponent of the press that modern militarism has yet produced in this country should owe so much to the assistance rendered him at this turning-point in his life by a newspaper man; that the General who, in the interests of regularity has always uncompromisingly opposed the enterprising subaltern, should himself have based his first success upon an act which may be called ‘pardonable indiscipline.’ How slender is the thread on which great issues hang!

Whatever view may be taken of Kitchener’s action at that momentous crisis of his life, this fact remains — he came to Egypt when she was plunged in misery and shame, when hopeless ruin seemed already the only outcome of past disasters, and when even greater public misfortunes appeared to be impending; he remained to see the country prosperous, her people contented, and peace happily restored within all her borders. In this marvellous feat of national regeneration his part has been no insignificant one.

CHAPTER X — AN ORIGINAL OFFICER OF THE NEW EGYPTIAN ARMY

WOLSELEY'S campaign of 1882 having been brought to a satisfactory termination, the policy of the moment determined on the formation of a new Egyptian army, which Kitchener seized the opportunity of joining. Hearing that the Egyptian army was being reorganised by Sir Evelyn Wood, he promptly volunteered for service, and was appointed one of the two majors of cavalry, four days before attaining his captaincy! Lieutenant Kitchener was actually promoted captain in January, 1883, and major in October, 1884; but it must be noted that an English officer, on joining the Egyptian army, was generally granted a rank higher (and in some cases two ranks) than that held by him in the British service.

As in the English Cabinet the conciliatory policy of withdrawing the British troops had already been decided upon, it was quite apparent to those upon whom now rested the responsibility for the good government of Egypt, that one of the first requisites in the reorganisation of that country was the creation of a native army which could be relied upon, not only to maintain civil order, but to overawe and keep in check the restless Bedouins of the outlying frontier provinces.

To General Sir Evelyn Wood was entrusted the task of creating a new Egyptian army, of which he was appointed Sirdar, or Commander-in-Chief. The material out of which he was to make a thoroughly capable and reliable fighting machine was by no means too promising, consisting, as it did, mostly of conscripts from that poor, down-trodden, spiritless class, the *fellaheen*. But with a sublime faith in his work, and a conviction that the 'Gippies' would prove themselves good soldiers, if only they were led by officers in whom they had implicit confidence, Sir Evelyn Wood, with the aid of time and patience and the exercise of British bull-dog persistence, ultimately achieved his object.

The size of the army had been fixed by Lord Dufferin at 6000 men, formed into eight battalions, among which twenty-six British officers were to be distributed. As already stated, Kitchener was attached to the

cavalry arm, in which he was second in command, to Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor, of the 19th Hussars.

In the selection of his assistants for discharging his onerous and responsible duties, Sir Evelyn certainly experienced no lack of choice, for on the outbreak of the trouble, numbers of eligible and highly-qualified men had flocked from all parts of the East to offer their services. Lieutenant Kitchener may possibly have congratulated himself on being one of the selected candidates; for it must be remembered that when he first offered himself for service in the land, in the regeneration of which he was destined to figure so largely, he was but an obscure young officer with no fighting record behind him. He was certainly alert, modestly assertive, and quietly confident in himself; perhaps his greatest and most potent recommendation was his ability to speak Arabic, though possibly his late chief in Anatolio, Sir Charles Wilson (who had been employed in the prosecution of Arabi) may have exercised some quiet influence on his behalf.

Supposing that the young soldier had been rejected by the officer testing candidates for the Egyptian cavalry — as he very nearly was, through indifferent horsemanship — where would have been the career of this brilliant soldier whose name has been mentioned with that of Marlborough? As it happened, our young officer scraped through the examination by almost the merest fluke, the examining officer happily being a man of no very exacting standards. Thus does the divinity behind the veil shape our ends, and mould the man for his destiny.

Duty once more called Herbert Kitchener; not exactly to the wilds of Lebanon, deep-shadowed by its dark tall cedars, but to the wilderness on the shores of the 'roaring Syrian Sea' just opposite, where those interminable plains of red tumultuous sand, beginning in a ragged fringe of plummy palms, roll away to the limitless desert of the interior. And be sure Major Kitchener, with the thoroughness that has marked his every undertaking, was not long in acquiring a first-hand knowledge of the people among whom he was called upon to work. So intimate, indeed, did he become with the Egyptian character, that missions of extreme delicacy were often entrusted to him, all of them carried out to the perfect satisfaction of his superiors.

On the problem of the fellah warrior, Mr John Macdonald, war correspondent of the *Daily News*, is an authority entitled to be heard. In

the *Nineteenth Century*, he writes on this subject of the Egyptian soldier, incidentally introducing us to a sight of Kitchener at work on the raw material:—

‘I had the good fortune to be one of the three present at the birth — as I suppose it may be named — of the new cavalry, to the command of which Taylor had just been appointed. Taylor had invited me the night before to accompany him and his friend to witness the operation which they were both to supervise. A tall, slim, thin-faced slightly stooping figure in long boots, cut-away dark morning coat, and Egyptian fez somewhat tilted over his eyes — such, as I remember him, was the young soldier who was destined to fulfil Gordon’s task of smashing the Mahdi.’

“He’s quiet,” Taylor whispered to me, as we were getting ready for the start; “that’s his way.” And again, with the characteristic jerk of the head, which all will remember who knew Taylor, “He’s clever.”

Macdonald’s entertaining article tells how the three drove, in the early morning of the 8th January, 1883, to the barracks, where some forty slipshod men were waiting to be put through their paces as riders; on the way Taylor did most of the talking, Kitchener expressing himself with an occasional nod or monosyllable. ‘We begin with the officers,’ said Taylor; ‘we shall drill them first, and then put them to drill the troopers. We have no troopers just yet, but we have 440 horses ready for them.’

And then began the selection of the fellah officers. They were to be tested in horsemanship. The first batch of them were ordered to mount. ‘Round they went, Indian file, Kitchener, like a circus-master, standing in the centre. Had he flourished a long whip, he might have passed for a show-master at rehearsal. Neither audible nor visible sign did he give of any feeling aroused in him by a performance mostly disappointing and sometimes ridiculous. His hands buried in his trousers pocket, he quietly watched the emergence of the least unfit ... While Kitchener looked on unmoved, Taylor’s broad shoulders shook with a suppressed laugh.’

And so the article — written in 1898 — proceeds to describe the evolution of the Anglo-Egyptian Army, which in time proved its fighting qualities, and justified its existence at Omdurman. Kitchener found the Egyptian troops ‘splendid soldiers, if only they would not run away.’ He taught them not to run away. And with them he won back the Sudan, and brought peace and progress into the desert.

One is reminded here of the somewhat similar position in which Baden-Powell found himself towards the end of the South African War. Wishing to organise a new force of police, to be called the South African Constabulary, Kitchener sent for Baden-Powell and opened the conversation very abruptly by saying, 'You are the man who found humour in the siege of Mafeking? I want you to organise this new force, and when you see the material you have to work upon I hope you will find humour there, too.' Like Kitchener, Baden-Powell was eminently successful in his task, Kitchener himself a year or two later characterising the Constabulary as 'this fine body of men.'

CHAPTER XI — MAHDISM

AS Kitchener's next achievement was to bring him into actual contact with Mahdism — although by that time the Mahdi had been succeeded by his former lieutenant, who called himself the Khalifa — it will be necessary to get some idea of that movement.

The Mahdi, or Mussulman Messiah, first came into public notice in 1881, some two or three years before the British went to Egypt. He was born at Dongola, in the Sudan, the land of the Dervishes and the home of fanaticism. No rising saint was more ascetic than the young Dongolawi, Mohammed Ahmed, the fervid disciple of the holy man, Mohammed Sherif. But one day the Master gave a feast, at which there was dancing and singing; and this so shocked the disciple that he gave vent to his pious horror, and told his master such frivolity was displeasing to Allah. The incensed Sherif replied by heartily cursing his disciple and casting him out. The disciple sprinkled ashes on his head, placed a yoke on his neck, and humbly implored forgiveness.

Again he was cursed and cast out. Then he gathered himself together, joined himself to a new teacher, and became a straighter ascetic than ever.

Presently the fame of Mohammed Ahmed's sanctity began to spread, and adherents flocked to him from every side. He was an ambitious man, and he saw his opportunity. The Sudanese were smarting under the heavy exactions of their Egyptian oppressors, and it would be an easy matter for a bold leader to rouse them to resistance. Mohammed Ahmed risked all, and proclaimed himself El Mahdi el Muntazer, the expected Messiah of the Mussulmans.

Such presumption could not long remain unnoticed. The Governor-General of Khartoum sent two companies of soldiers to arrest him; the Mahdi's followers fell upon them unawares and destroyed them. Several other attempts met with the same results, quite a small army of Mahdists being engaged in the last one. By the September of 1882 such vast hordes of barbarous tribesmen had flocked to the Mahdi's standard that he laid siege to El Obeid, the chief city of Kordofan. Although beaten

back in the first assault, he was able to continue the investment for five months, at the end of which the town surrendered, when the ruthlessness of the sack and massacre taught doubters what they had to expect. Henceforth the Sudan doubted no more. Of a truth the Mahdi had come.

One Mussulman sect has a tradition that a Mahdi (monitor or leader) shall arise among them in some unknown day, who will initiate the whole world into the mysteries of Islam. But this particular Mahdi had no religious or political recognition whatever in the Mussulman world. He was a pretender and an adventurer who, having succeeded in organising a number of lawless Arabs, increased in strength with each success; but he was an avowed rebel against the Turkish and Egyptian governments, and both desired to crush him. He had raised the banner of independence, under which the warlike tribes of the Sudan, so long subject to the Egyptian government, had revolted.

The events that followed come within the scope of British history. In 1883 a British officer, Hicks Pasha, was chosen to take command of the Khedive's troops advancing through the Sudan. The expedition was entirely lost sight of for many weeks. Then the intelligence slowly filtered through the desert that the whole of the troops, with the Pasha and his European officers, had been surrounded by the rebel hordes and utterly destroyed. This was our first direct collision with Mahdism.

How the Sudan fell so completely into the hands of the Mahdi is a story of Egyptian mismanagement and ineptitude. The last chapter in it is that of the ill-fated expedition of Hicks Pasha. In this half-hearted effort to regain a hold on the remoter provinces, the gallant Colonel Hicks had left Cairo in February, 1883, and reached Khartoum in March, where his first operations were successful. On 9th September he left his camp at Omdurman with 10,000 men, purposing to retake El Obeid, from which the Dervishes had made themselves masters of the surrounding wastes of Kordofan. The rest of the tale is mostly conjecture — a nightmare of dissension and treachery, of three days' desperate fighting against overwhelming numbers, of the most desperate valour proving unavailing to avert a general massacre and utter annihilation.

While this tragedy of the desert was being played, Kitchener was taking part in a brief interlude in another wilderness — the wilderness of Sinai, the scene of the forty years' wanderings of the Israelites. This was projected from Cairo, in November, 1883, by the committee of the

Palestine Exploration Society, and placed under the direction of Professor Edward Hull, who considered himself particularly fortunate in having at his disposal the assistance of Captain Kitchener, a man not only able to speak the language of the inhabitants, but an explorer of ripe experience in those parts. When the dire news of the Hicks catastrophe reached the exploring party about Christmas time, notwithstanding the interest his peaceful occupation had for him, Kitchener thought it incumbent upon him to get back to Cairo as early as it could be made convenient for him. Leaving the survey party at a spot near the Beersheba of Scripture, he commenced his return journey westward on the last day of December, travelling as 'Abdullah Bey,' with an escort of four mounted Arabs, and arriving safely at Ismailia after an arduous march through a difficult and rather unsafe country.

The Hicks tragedy was not the only one of the kind. At El Teb, Osman Digna, one of the Mahdi's most redoubtable emirs, had attacked with a thousand men an Egyptian force of three times the size, under Baker Pasha, and utterly destroyed it. This was in February, 1884; and although General Graham, with a hastily collected force, had afterwards defeated the Arabs at El Teb and at Tamai, the situation went from bad to worse. Within the space of three months ten thousand men were killed in the Eastern Sudan, and the climax came in July, when the heroic Gordon was shut up in Khartoum, completely cut off from friendly succour.

At Khartoum, at the junction of the Blue Nile with the main stream, a small body of troops had been left as a garrison by the ill-fated Hicks Pasha. It was now decided to send help to enable this garrison to be withdrawn without further loss. The command of the relieving expedition was entrusted to General Gordon, that modern type of Christian chivalry, who knew the people well, and volunteered to effect the peaceful withdrawal of the garrisons.

The failure of Gordon's mission is too well known. The fearless hero undertook to ride with only a small body of troops, through the heart of the Dark Continent. The Sudan was not unknown to him. In 1874 he had been sent there by the Khedive to suppress the slave traffic. As part of the work, he had placed steamers on the Nile and set up stations along the course of the river; he had also explored the Albert Nyanza from shore to shore. In 1877 he was made Governor of the whole of the

Sudan, a post he held for three years. During this period, working with tremendous energy, he completely put an end to the slave trade.

Gordon reached Khartoum on his new mission early in 1884. After relieving a large number of the garrison, he was himself hemmed in by the Mahdi's followers. His gun-boats, however, managed to keep the Nile clear of his enemies, and had he desired to escape alone, and return without fulfilling his mission, he might easily have done so. But Gordon was not the man to do that. He managed, before the city was completely invested, to send despatches to the Government at home, strongly urging them not to abandon the loyal garrison in Khartoum, but to send help forthwith.

A Relief Expedition having been decided upon, in June, 1884, Kitchener was appointed Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General of the Intelligence Department, under Sir Charles Wilson, and, as such, took part in that inglorious expedition up the Nile. In the light of our later knowledge, we are too accustomed to look upon Kitchener as 'Gordon's Avenger'; but we may see him here playing the part of a would-be rescuer.

The preparations for the expedition were not hurried. The first British troops did not arrive at Wady Halfa till 23rd August. The expedition was to ascend the Nile in 800 flat-bottomed boats, navigated by Canadian Indians, or *voyageurs*. By the time the advance was begun, towards the end of September, there were 13,559 British troops in Egypt. Lord Wolseley arrived at Wady Halfa on 5th October, and a month later the force was at Dongola, at which time Gordon reported 'all well at Khartoum.'

CHAPTER XII — WOLSELEY'S RELIEF EXPEDITION

AT last a British force under Lord Wolseley was despatched. It was decided that the main body should proceed up the river. At Abu Klea the Arabs were defeated, and after one or two other smaller engagements, the advancing force was met by Gordon's steamers, which had come down the Nile to seek the long-looked-for aid. But when the relieving force reached Khartoum it was only to find that the town had fallen into the hands of the enemy two days before, and that its brave defenders were no longer alive. The death of General Gordon went straight to the hearts of the British people; as one admirer said, a wonderful life had been perfected by a heroic death. Seldom has a tragedy of this character produced such an effect upon the nation.

Gordon's long and glorious defence of Khartoum will always fascinate the historian. That one man, a European among Africans, a Christian among Mohammedans, should by his genius have inspired 7000 soldiers of inferior race, and by his courage have sustained the hearts of 30,000 inhabitants, notoriously timid, and with such materials and encumbrances, should, during a period of 317 days, have offered a vigorous resistance to the increasing attacks of the enemy, who, though cruel, would yet accept surrender, is an event without parallel in history.

As Intelligence Officer, Kitchener got into close contact with the various tribes between the Nile and the Red Sea. By his knowledge of the people and their language, he was able to pass himself off as a native; he won over the Bishareen Arabs, and of the Ababdeh and Foggara Arabs he formed a chain of outposts from desert to sea.

In June, however, Berber, the chief link between Cairo and Khartoum, fell into the hands of the enemy. A secret and highly adventurous mission was then undertaken by the indomitable Intelligence Officer himself. The Mudir of Dongola, being suspected of but lax loyalty to the Khedive, Kitchener undertook to go to Dongola to ascertain the real facts and put things on a more satisfactory footing. He set out with a small native escort, riding with them, dressed like them, speaking only their tongue, and arrived at his destination without hurt or molestation. The

Mudir may, or may not, have been tampered with; but not only was this venturesome 'infidel,' masquerading as a native, amicably received in Dongola, but he succeeded effectively in detaching the Mudir from the Mahdi — perhaps as much by the aid of solid gold as by the use of persuasive words; but there was no doubt as to the success of the mission. As an earnest of his friendship, the Mudir sallied forth, fell upon the Mahdists at Korti, and defeated them with great slaughter.

Nor was this the whole of Kitchener's intrepid undertaking. In the same disguise he penetrated ninety miles farther south, where he was found by the famous war correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, Mr Bennet Burleigh, who thus writes of the meeting:—

'To my astonishment and delight, I found one Englishman within the mud walls of Debbah — Captain Kitchener, R.E. He gave me a hearty welcome, and added to my debt of gratitude by producing two bottles of claret — his whole store — which we most loyally drank at dinner. For weeks he had not heard the English tongue spoken, and he naturally was glad to see a countryman able to tell him something of what was happening outside the Sudan.'

Few men can claim to have risked more than Kitchener did, when engaged in these highly romantic but dangerous roamings, disguised as a native of so jealous and so suspicious a race. If he had any fear at all, it was not of death itself, but of the manner of it. He had once witnessed these people put a spy to death by the most cruel torture possible, and always carried secreted about him, when on these dangerous missions, a small phial of poison. At least, it was so reported at the time.

From Dongola he got a letter through to Gordon about September; and though Gordon in his *Journals* occasionally waxes sarcastic at the expense of the Intelligence Department — using the phrase 'Kitchener and Co.' — Kitchener's achievement was not quite so easy as it may have seemed. In October Colonel Stewart had tried to get down the Nile with Gordon's despatches, but his steamer ran on the rocks, and the messengers were all murdered. Kitchener also managed to let Gordon know of poor Stewart's fate.

On 10th November Gordon writes complainingly — 'Why Kitchener did not tell me the route the Expedition would take is inexplicable, for it would have done no possible harm, seeing the Mahdi has his spies

everywhere.' But the silence is not inexplicable — Kitchener himself did not know.

Kitchener accompanied the Desert Column under Sir Herbert Stewart — to save time a force of 1100 picked men, the flower of the army, mounted on camels, instead of following the tortuous bend of the river which here makes a great curve like the letter U, were sent in a straight line, the short cut across the desert from the one point to the other.

Here is a glimpse of one out of many novel and weird experiences encountered in this form of desert campaigning; it is extracted from *With the Camel Corps up the Nile*, by Count Gleichen, who, as a British guardsman, accompanied the expedition:—

'It was a novel and pleasant sensation going ahead of the column in the quiet moonlit desert, not a sound being made by the two thousand camels in rear as their padded feet passed over the sand. By-and-by the men got sleepy, and their laughter and talking grew fainter and fainter, till at last it ceased altogether.'

If the official head of the Intelligence Department was Sir Charles Wilson, Kitchener was the active and energetic executive. Somewhere in his *Journals at Khartoum*, about this period, Gordon gives expression to his impatience — unreasonably, perhaps — with a certain Major Kitchener of the Intelligence Department, whose information was either not despatched or somehow miscarried. Says Count Gleichen:—

'Occasionally during the day an officer or sentry on outpost would spot a native, miles off in the plain, and signal it down to the commanding officer. The Intelligence Department, still, happily represented by Major Kitchener, with some Hussars, would promptly saddle any beasts that came to hand, and scoot out after him. Several times the reconnaissance party captured and scattered a caravan, bringing dates and stores for the Mahdi, and we soon had quite a respectable number of prisoners.'

This was while the force was encamped at Gakdul Wells, only 100 miles on its way, awaiting the arrival of a convoy with stores from Korti. When, on 11th January, the convoy did arrive, and brought with it an order for Kitchener's return to Korti, it may be guessed with what reluctance, not to say disgust, he severed himself from the expedition.

However, the Desert Column failed in the end to achieve its object. At Abu Klea an army of 10,000 Arabs had been encountered, and the most savage and bloody action ever fought in the Sudan by British troops

followed. The British square was penetrated, and ten per cent, of the entire force either killed or wounded, the redoubtable Colonel Fred Burnaby being among the slain. Sir Herbert Stewart received a wound from which he afterwards died, the command devolving upon Sir Charles Wilson. Though in the end the enemy was driven off with immense slaughter and the column resumed its advance; and though the Nile was eventually gained after another fierce engagement at Metemma, it was all in vain. It was too late. Khartoum had fallen, and Gordon had met a hero's death!

All the same, Kitchener was sick at heart as he returned to Korti and thence to Alexandria. The Gordon Relief Expedition was ordered home, Wolseley not being allowed to proceed to Khartoum. The disaster was complete.

Major Kitchener was still at Dongola when he heard of the decision of the British Cabinet to send out a rescue expedition. It is said that when Gordon heard a rumour that the British Government had commissioned Kitchener to ransom him for the sum of twenty thousand pounds, he repudiated the pusillanimous proposal with scorn. Of Kitchener himself, he came to entertain a high opinion, endorsing the estimate of Sir Samuel Baker, which was expressed in no uncertain terms:—

‘The man whom I have always placed my hopes upon, Major Kitchener, R.E., who is one of the few very superior British officers with a cool and good head and a hard constitution, combined with untiring energy, has now pushed up to Dongola, and has proved that the Mudir is dependable.’

This famous African explorer had already arrived at the conclusion that if any man was capable of reconquering the Sudan, Kitchener was that man.

On 26th November Gordon writes in his diary: ‘I like Baker’s description of Kitchener.’ On two later occasions Gordon refers to him approvingly as the best man to make Governor-General.

He is said to have given evidence at this time of his faculty for tactical operations in the field, by drawing up a scheme for the relief of Khartoum and the rescue of Gordon. This object was to have been effected by a small brigade of infantry, led with confidence and moved with celerity; but, almost needless to say, the young officer’s plan did not commend itself to his superiors.

In the Nile expedition of 1884-5 his knowledge of Arabic again called his services into great requisition, and being attached to the Intelligence Department, no officer was found more useful. Yet, as we have seen, poor Gordon in Khartoum did not always appreciate his efforts. Here is one incident from his *Journals*, however, which is worth transcribing:—

‘A curious thing has happened; my friend Kitchener sent up the post; he wrapped the letters in some old newspapers (he gave me no news in his letter). The old newspapers were thrown out in the garden; there a clerk who knew some English found them blowing about, and gave them to the apothecary of the hospital, who knows English. The doctor found him reading them, saw the date, “15th September,” and secured them for me; they are like gold, as you may imagine, since we have no news since 24th February, 1884 ... These papers gave us far more information than any of your letters. Did K. send them by accident or on purpose?’

On 19th January, 1885, a message was received from Gordon; it was dated 29th December, and said: ‘Khartoum is all right; could hold out for a year.’ On 26th January the city had fallen, and Gordon was dead.

The total result of all these gallant efforts — Gordon’s mission, the massacre of Baker’s levies at El Teb, Graham’s expedition to Suakin, the second Suakin campaign — was just nil. After the death of Gordon, in 1885, the Mahdi was practically left in undisturbed possession of Khartoum and the surrounding country.

The British were content to remain awhile at Wady Halfa, with its railway facilities like those of a miniature Crewe, there preparing themselves for the final struggle. Little did the Dervishes dream, during the period of quiescence, how rudely they were to be awakened one day by the slow but certain methods of one of Britain’s most distinguished Generals, then scarcely more than in his novitiate.

One curious incident remains to be told. A certain Olivier Pain had been sent out by the Irish in Paris to join the Mahdi at El Obeid, in July, 1884. About a year afterwards the man was reported dead, but the date and place of his death were not specified till an interpreter named Selikovitch, who had been dismissed by the British authorities, asserted that Pain had been executed by order of Colonel Kitchener, in April, 1885. No trustworthy evidence was ever forthcoming, and although some little excitement was caused in Paris by this report (which was probably

concocted for political reasons), no investigation was made or deemed necessary, and the affair was soon forgotten.

CHAPTER XIII — AS SOLDIER AND ADMINISTRATOR

AFTER his successful and destructive assault on Khartoum, the Mahdi built himself a new capital on a healthier spot, at Omdurman, on the opposite side of the river. Here he spent the brief remnants of his fevered existence — he survived Gordon by a few months only — in a life of voluptuous indulgence. Before his death he carefully nominated his lieutenant, Abdullahi, as his successor. Abdullahi, known as the Khalifa, was a viciously disposed man, savage, vain, and crafty, beneath whose yoke the Sudan was soon groaning more bitterly than ever.

Upon the failure of the Relief Expedition, Kitchener had resigned his commission in the Egyptian army, and returned to England. But soon after going out to Zanzibar as one of the Boundary Commissioners, he found himself back in Egypt again.

In 1886 he was appointed Governor of the Red Sea Territories, in succession to General Watson, and the judicious advice he then gave the Arabs enabled them to overthrow Osman Digna at Tamai with great slaughter. Subsequently he succeeded Colonel Chermide as Governor-General of the Red Sea Littoral, and Commandant at Suakin. In the meantime his services having been recognised by the usual method of 'mention in despatches,' promotion to Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel had followed.

As Governor of Suakin, Kitchener adopted a policy which, though enterprising, was little likely to pacify a disturbed district. His ambition now appeared to be taking definite form, and he was eager to undertake posts of position and responsibility. With the restoration of order and increased security, trade had begun to recover itself around the Suakin coasts, but Kitchener's methods were scarcely calculated to inspire the traders with confidence. He harried and raided the surrounding tribes so incessantly, that trade dwindled away again, and Suakin became the centre of greater ferment than ever. Towards the close of 1887 things culminated by the re-appearance of Osman Digna upon the scene. As, however, the defences of the town had been vastly strengthened and improved by the new Governor, Osman, after reconnoitring, thought well

to retire again. In the January following, notwithstanding that he had received instructions not to employ British officers or Egyptian regulars in offensive operations, Kitchener marched out of Suakin to incite the friendly tribes to follow up Osman Digna. On the 17th of that month he and his friendlies came upon Osman's camp at Handoub, fell upon him, and in the first assault successfully routed the enemy. But a little later, when his allies, after their usual manner, had dispersed to plunder, the enemy rallied, marched again to the attack, and drove the plunderers away with loss. Kitchener then came on the field again, but himself met with defeat; and in endeavouring to cover the retreat of his friendlies, received a serious wound in the jaw, which at first was believed to be dangerous. The Governor returned to Suakin, not only wounded and discomfited, but numbering two British officers among his list of twenty-two killed.

There can be no doubt Commandant Kitchener had obtained full value for every farthing of the subsidies paid to the friendly tribes, for he was too keen and too fully acquainted with the Arab character to be hoodwinked by mere pretence, or lip service.

Happily his wound, though severe, was not dangerous; and in a week or so he would have actively renewed his aggressive tactics had he not been definitely forbidden by the British Government. To his military conduct, praise was awarded in the usual calm language of officialism; but his policy was positively reprehended.

'The policy which it is desirable to follow in the Eastern Sudan,' wrote Sir Evelyn Baring on 14th March, in measured rebuke, 'should consist in standing purely on the defensive against any hostile movement or combination of the Arab tribes, in avoiding any course of action which might involve the ultimate necessity of offensive action, and in encouraging legitimate trade by every means in our power.'

The Governor, showing no inclination to carry out a policy so much at variance with his own views, was transferred in 1888 to a purely military appointment, and became Adjutant-General of the Egyptian army, with the local rank of Ferik, or Lieutenant-General, and in this capacity was busily employed for the next four years in the War Office at Cairo. Besides being second in command of the army, he was also Inspector-General of Police at Cairo.

In May, 1888, Kitchener being invalided, had left for England, being succeeded at Suakin in September by Lieutenant-Colonel Holled Smith. Upon his arrival home he was appointed Aide-de-Camp to Queen Victoria, an appointment which carried with it the rank of Colonel; he was also awarded the Medjidie of the second class. Towards the end of the year Colonel Kitchener returned to Egypt, and was appointed to command a brigade of the Egyptian army in the Sudan.

Meanwhile intermittent fighting had been going on in the Eastern Sudan, and by 1890 the Khalifa was reported to be supreme in the south.

The most troublesome of the Mahdi's lieutenants in the Eastern Sudan was Osman Digna. This notable warrior was the son of a Turkish merchant, and had married a woman of the warlike Howdendowa tribe. He had a wide reputation as an inveterate fighter and slave-dealer, and was remarkable in possessing the faculty, whenever defeated, of making good his retreat, as he did after the fights at El Teb and Tamai.

Sir Francis Grenfell, the Sirdar, having come to the conclusion that, without further delay, Osman Digna must be crushed, found in Colonel Kitchener an officer only too eager to assist him in the endeavour; and certainly no one was more familiar with every phase of the work such an attempt would involve. He therefore took up the task with alacrity. His brigade was the 1st Sudanese; and so thoroughly were these black troops inspired with confidence in his leadership, that the storming by them of Osman's entrenchments at Gamaizeh, outside Suakin, was quite a brilliant little affair; no troops could have behaved with greater steadiness under fire, or acquitted themselves more gallantly than they did on that occasion.

In the following summer (August, 1889) Colonel Kitchener was again in command of the mounted troops at the battle of Toski, where hard and desperate fighting was carried on for seven hours. Again the charge of Hussars and Egyptian cavalry was irresistible, crumbling up masses of spearmen and riflemen, and putting them to headlong flight across the desert sands, arms and standards being captured in large quantities. In this engagement was slain the notorious Wad el Nejumi, the man who had planned the destruction of Hicks Pasha's army, and instigated the 'rushing' of Khartoum, in which Gordon was overwhelmed. Colonel Kitchener was again mentioned in despatches, and received a C.B.

The victory may have been a crushing blow to the Dervishes of the coast country, but the subsequent efforts at pacifying the district — the succour of the wounded, the lenient treatment of prisoners, and even the starting of relief works for the crowds of starving refugees — may have had some little effect as well. At best, however, Mahdism was only scotched in the littoral; southward it was as strong and aggressive as ever; there desultory raiding was always going on, designs of conquest were still cherished, if, indeed, the actual planning and preparation were not always under discussion in the council. On the other hand, at Cairo the work of soldier-making and army-building was always quietly and steadily progressing; and to no man more than Herbert Kitchener is praise due for making valiant soldiers out of slaves and negroes, of providing Egypt with disciplined and efficient native troops capable of fighting steadily in battle, even in the forefront of the conflict.

At the War Office in Cairo Kitchener first revealed himself as an uncompromising reformer and economist, and gave the earliest exhibition of those remarkable powers of organisation which have since so largely and so conspicuously distinguished him. Yet his promotion to the post of Sirdar, when it was vacated by Sir F. Grenfell in 1892, came as a great surprise. The strongest candidate was believed to be Colonel Wodehouse, who for several years had been in command of a large force in continual contact with the enemy, and had been alike successful in the field and in civil administration; whereas Kitchener, though known as a brave and active soldier and an excellent official, had been, in the estimation of his superiors, little less than a failure as a civil administrator.

The secret of this amazing appointment may possibly be traced to the influence exerted on his behalf by Sir Evelyn Baring; and the support given him at this important crisis in his career has been continued ever since. Mr Churchill boldly explains the matter in one pithy sentence: 'Lord Cromer had found the military officer whom he considered capable of reconquering the Sudan when the opportunity should come.' No judgment was ever more amply justified by the sequel of events.

It was not long before Kitchener proved that the position in which he had been placed was one for which he was peculiarly fitted. The astonishment caused by his appointment to the Sirdarship soon passed away, and, by 1894 his administrative powers had been proved at least

equal to his soldier-making ability. So certain was he of his position and so convinced of his ability to fill it that, when the Khedive (probably inspired by French jealousy) spoke disparagingly of the new Egyptian army, Kitchener threatened to resign. The last man to scoff at an Egyptian army should have been the Khedive of Egypt. Kitchener's threat, however, had a salutary effect on him. The action of the British Government, too, served to make him hesitate before allowing the Sirdar to resign.

In Gordon's time the policy of the Home Government had too often been timid and vacillating; but now their support was promptly forthcoming, and a K.C.M.G. was conferred upon Kitchener as a mark of appreciation. This was but the forerunner of other similar tokens of the country's pride in its silent general. The effect of the honour paid him was powerfully felt in Egyptian official circles. Henceforth there were no further manifestations of Khedival dissatisfaction with the new army in Egypt.

CHAPTER XIV — HOW THE RECONQUEST OF THE SUDAN WAS CONCEIVED

MILITARY operations of a more momentous character were to follow, into the scope and nature of which a preliminary survey will enable us to obtain a better insight.

For the best general description of the manner in which the recapture of the Sudan was conceived, planned, and accomplished, we are indebted to a capital magazine article written by a staff officer who, with credit to himself, went through the campaign, notebook in hand, shrewdly observant of every happening.

The reconquest of the Sudan was achieved by the most unconventional methods of campaigning ever known to the history of British warfare. When the average Aldershot general takes the field, he has foisted upon him a mass of phenomenally useless documents which not unfrequently cause more trouble and paralysis than any acts of the enemy. Kitchener's office stationery consisted of a sheaf of telegraph forms which he carried in his helmet, and a pencil which he carried in his pocket. He seldom read an official letter, and never wrote one, thereby saving much wear and tear to all who served under him. It is a model which would perhaps be dangerous to offer for imitation; so few Kitcheners are sent out from Aldershot. Here was a hard thinker, an accurate thinker; not an aimless dreamer, whose imaginings were without order, sequence, or logic; but one who thought completely round his subject, seeing it from every point of view, planning every move, foreseeing every countermove, registering every requirement, forestalling every difficulty, and arranging everything to happen as he wanted it to happen.

Each commander of the units scattered all over the enormous strategic chessboard from Cairo to Kassala, and from Suakin to Korti, was allowed to know only that which immediately concerned his own work. He knew, for instance, the size and capabilities of his own command, and what he was expected to do with it; he probably knew who was in command of the next post, some hundreds of miles away; but whether

the main army had advanced or retired, had fought and won or bodily disappeared, he never knew, and got tired of trying to discover.

Why should he know? Kitchener looked after that — Kitchener looked after everything. Why should he trouble himself after having proved the military omniscience of the man whose orders he was carrying out? He knew that the very moment the last pair of boots was worn out, and the last meal had been issued to the cattle, a fresh supply would be dumped down in some mysterious manner, from goodness knows where, by road or rail or river, and that the transport would have passed on to serve someone else, almost before he had heaved the small sigh of satisfaction natural to a situation so gratifying. And then one fine day when he least expected it, when he had almost come to regard himself as one forgotten and out of mind, a few curt words came clicking over the wires — ‘March in half an hour.’ And he marched; and all the others marched; until on another fine morning at dawn he found himself with the others, and they and he found that they were the army. But how it was all done he did not exactly know, and he certainly had no time to inquire, for all the news vouchsafed to any one was that the army would march again at dawn.

The staff officer from whose reminiscences these impressions have been extracted, writes:— ‘I remember well meeting Kitchener in 1897, and asking him when The Event was due to happen. ‘Thirteen months hence,’ was the answer. ‘Thirteen months!’ I said; ‘that is a long time to wait.’ ‘Yes it is,’ said K.; ‘but remember that some of us have been waiting for it for thirteen years.’

Wars are not waged — or seldom successfully — without money, and plenty of it. The budget provisions of all those years had not been too generous, and the scheming and contriving entailed upon those who were responsible for its expenditure had been as curious as it was admirable. The work of Wood and Grenfell had been an endless endeavour to make both ends meet. Patiently they had laboured in the forming and fashioning of the weapon, in the selection of the material, as had Wingate in the amassing of information. It was no light undertaking to get together the best material and the most suitable and up-to-date equipment, which would evolve a field army out of a somewhat indifferent police.

No campaign ever had a more curious inception than that undertaken for the reconquest of the Sudan. At a Cabinet Council a big map, fortunately not a large scale map, lay upon the table. Someone has his eye caught by the name Dongola in large-sized letters. What more natural than that Mr Chamberlain should remark, 'Let's go to Dongola.' It was all so simple. In fact, it sounded quite reasonable, and no one made any objection. Off went a wire, and before Lord Cromer had time to turn round, the army was on the move. This, avers a well-informed military authority, was literally, and without exaggeration, the origin of this notable campaign.

The final campaign was elaborated and theoretically fought out to a successful finish at a meeting at which only Kitchener, Wingate, and another officer were present. In less than two hours the whole plan of the operations was laid bare, its author formulating every want, meeting every inquiry, and satisfying every objection. The Sirdar had worked right through the campaign, from beginning to end, in his mind. He had calculated to a nicety when everything would be ready, and the result achieved — for instance, how many boats would be required to convey so many men, so many animals, and so many guns on a fixed date (depending on the Nile flood, which could be calculated with precision); the supplies necessary to be at this place or that; when the British contingent, 'calculated economically to the fraction of a guardsman by the order to leave band-boys behind,' was to arrive, to steam and to march to a given point, and 'to fight its usual battle 1600 miles from the chair in which K. was sitting'; and then return home immediately the task for which it was required was accomplished.

If it all happened precisely as ordained at this little council of war, it was not that the unexpected had been banished from the art of war, but that the master mind directing the operations had the gift of foreseeing possible difficulties and making due provision for overcoming them; that with stern and unbending severity every subordinate, high or low, was held responsible for the work allotted him, however trivial it might be, or however important. No failure was tolerated, no excuse ever allowed. As illustrations of this inflexible rule, an officer who lost a Nile boat through the stupidity of a subordinate, found himself a ruined man; when the wires failed to connect the general with his base at a critical moment, the young officer in charge of the communications sacrificed the whole fruits

of his long and meritorious labours. A chief who wants to be exact has to be relentless.

The word 'impossible' is not in the Kitchener dictionary, and he has little patience with officers who venture to suggest that any order given by him involves anything impracticable. For example, at a later period of the war, after the victory of Omdurman, a boat-service was organised for the conveyance of the sick and wounded. The boats were to be towed along the bank, according to the usual method employed in English canals. The officer in charge of the first convoy of boats wired to Kitchener: 'Further progress impossible owing to bush on river bank.' Kitchener laconically replied: 'Cut down the bush.' The convoy reached its destination.

The Sirdar, as he appeared at this time, when his personality first began to attract attention, has been described with almost photographic accuracy, and with great psychological insight, by Mr G. W. Steevens, in his famous work *With Kitchener to Khartoum*:— 'He stands several inches over six feet, straight as a lance, and looks out imperiously above most men's heads; his motions are deliberate and strong; slender but firmly knit, he seems built for tireless, steel wire endurance rather than for power or agility. Steady, passionless eyes, shaded by decisive brows, brick-red rather full cheeks, a long moustache, beneath which you divine an immovable mouth; his face is harsh and neither appeals for affection nor stirs dislike.'

Major-General Kitchener's age at the time of the capture of Khartoum was forty-eight, as reckoned by years; but as our authority, regarding him at that moment, puts it — 'he has no age but the prime of life; no body but one to carry his mind; no face but one to keep his brain behind. The brain and the will are the essence and the whole of the man — a brain and a will so perfect in their workings that, in the face of extremist difficulty they never seem to know what struggle is.'

It is impossible to imagine him as otherwise than seeing the right thing to do, and doing it; and this always with a precision so unerring it appears more machine-like than human. Unfortunately for the slothful who serve under him, he reckons everybody ought to be as tireless as himself.

He was undoubtedly the right man in the right place; he had begun life in the Royal Engineers, by no means the least favourable soil for the

cultivation of the military faculty; and, early in his career, had turned his attention to the study of the Levant. There he was left to his own initiative. It cannot be too often repeated that this time of preparation with the Palestine Exploration Fund gave him an insight into the conditions of Oriental life, a knowledge of Eastern character and modes of thought, and of the effect of Islamism upon its votaries, which stood him in excellent stead in his Egyptian labours. He learned to plan, to organise, to carry through his intentions with no dream of failure. He may have been fortunate in being appointed to positions in which his special talents were able to show themselves to greatest advantage; but certain it is that he made the most of his opportunities and that the evolution of the Egyptian army reflected the utmost credit upon him and those associated with him in the task.

He was one of the original twenty-six officers charged with the task of calling the new Egyptian army into being, and now at the end of fifteen years spent in the earnest pursuit of this object, had everything ripe for the final harvesting. In the meantime he had made desert warfare the study of his life.

CHAPTER XV — THE DONGOLA EXPEDITION

ON 12th March, 1896, the Dongola Expedition was formally authorised. The Sirdar received his instructions and left Cairo, accompanied by Colonel Rundle, his chief of staff, on 22nd March, arriving at Wady Halfa on the 29th, where his peculiar powers of organisation were at once given full play.

During April he remained at Halfa busily engaged in superintending the extension of the railway and the accumulation of supplies. The month of May was occupied in preparing for the advance, stores being steadily accumulated ninety miles beyond, at Akasha. The concentration began on 1st June, when the Sirdar left Wady Halfa for the front. The Railway Battalion then dropped their picks and shovels, and shouldered their Remingtons, becoming the garrisons of the posts on the line of communication.

Sir Herbert Kitchener marched out of Wady Halfa, at the head of a mixed force of British and Egyptian troops to the number of 9000. An Italian army had been severely defeated in Abyssinia, and the Dervishes thought the moment opportune for the delivery of further attacks. The Sirdar advanced with caution, constructing a railway behind him to keep up communication and supplies, while the gunboats on the Nile kept pace with the advancing army.

The common belief was that the addition of an English cavalry regiment to the Sirdar's command was due to distrust of the Egyptians in scouting, in forward movements, and in resisting the shock of a charge. It was felt, also, that without British support Egypt could not have held the Sudan an hour. The risk of sending Egyptians alone against the entrenchments of Omdurman was never entertained. The native army was therefore to be strengthened and stiffened with British and British-Indian troops, which would, of course, cost money to the British Exchequer.

The Sirdar's force was officered by such excellent men as Hunter, Lewis, Macdonald, Maxwell, and Burn Murdoch; he had also with him Major Wingate and Slatin Pasha. It was not a little owing to the splendid

efficiency of the Intelligence Department, under Wingate, that the Sirdar was enabled to deliver his final blow with such smashing effect. The eyes and ears of this department were everywhere, and its resourcefulness knew no bounds. Disguised as merchants, as warriors, as women, spies and secret agents were wherever serviceable information was to be picked up. The mass of detail pouring into headquarters was enormous, and needed only to be examined, sifted, and arranged to give that sure and certain knowledge of the foe which was essential to his complete undoing. In 1895 had appeared the most authoritative witness, in the person of Slatin Bey, an able Austrian officer who, in Gordon's time, had been Governor of Darfoor; and who, after spending ten years with the Mahdi and the Khalifa (actually a prisoner, yet partly in their confidence) had now escaped. By such means, and by others often involving immense risk and some cost, the secrets of the enemy were from time to time disclosed to the Sirdar; he knew the attitude and fighting strength of each desert tribe, their movements and their intentions, the jealousies and disputes of the various leaders, and the weight each one carried in council.

The advance was to be made by two routes, one by the river and the other along the old railroad track, now being relaid mile after mile. On 6th June the order was given for an attack on Firket to be made at daybreak. Through the black darkness of the night the forward march began, till the spot designed for the bivouac was reached just before midnight. At moonrise, and in strict silence, the march was resumed. At daybreak came suddenly the distant sound of a drum-beat from the direction of the Dervish camp. The camp was still a mile away, and quite hidden by the rising ground. The sound, it soon transpired, was not that of the alarm — it was the call to prayer.

Then with machine-like precision the two halves of the advancing force came together; the enemy was taken by surprise, and utterly crushed. In the assault the dash of the British officers was only equalled by the ardour of the native troops; the loopholed mud walls of Firket were swept clean, and the victory was complete.

Large stores of grain and war material fell into the conquerors' hands.

All this time the Dervishes had watched with apathy and unconcern these deliberate and machine-like preparations, which were destined, as they found when they suddenly awoke to the meaning of it all, for their

destruction. No sooner had the advance begun, than this engagement fought at Firket left 800 Arabs dead upon the field, another 500 of them wounded, and yet 600 more as prisoners. This brilliant opening of the campaign gave great satisfaction in England, and aroused an intense interest for the stages that were to follow.

It was the first battle on any considerable scale in which Kitchener had held supreme command, and naturally his unqualified success was looked upon as a good augury. He waited now for the extension of the railway line, and for an increase to his gunboat fleet on the river; at the same time accumulating supplies to enable him to deliver his next blow. A delay was also necessitated by the state of the Nile; the boats could not be got over the cataracts till the river had risen.

It was not till the end of August that he got his new boats, some of them specially constructed in England for the expedition; one of these, unfortunately, had to be left behind owing to an accident that completely disabled it.

An outbreak of cholera occurred, but when at last the advance began, the pestilence was soon left behind. Presently a terrific storm was encountered, which whirled blinding storms of sand, and brought on floods of water that rushed and swirled in swift, fierce torrents through every gorge and defile. Telegraph lines were broken down and great lengths of railway washed away.

Of all these difficulties and drawbacks the Sirdar's habitual earnestness and determination made comparatively light. The breakdown of his communications he promptly tackled by setting five thousand soldiers to repair the damage without a day's delay. And again the long march to Dongola was resumed with unabated confidence.

This famous desert march was a prodigious piece of work, but it was felt by those who accompanied it in the capacity of correspondents and critics, that it took too much energy out of the troops — so much so that had they at the end of it encountered an active enemy the result might have been somewhat doubtful.

As the expedition began to near its goal the enemy began to show in greater numbers. At Hafir they gave fight, but with the aid of the gunboats were easily driven back.

Then came the most important event in the war, the recapture of Dongola with its large stores of grain and war material. By the end of

September General Kitchener, after another fight, had dealt his first decisive blow, and was absolute master of Dongola. The province was restored to order, the tribesmen brought to subjection — the Baggaras, little more than a tribe of brigands, were utterly cleared out — and the fertile lands once more given over to peaceful cultivation.

The barriers of the Sudan was thus broken through, and though the Khalifa's power had not been brought to naught the defeat had destroyed much of his influence. It was the beginning of the end.

CHAPTER XVI — THE RAILWAY THROUGH THE DESERT

AMONG the rewards showered upon Kitchener for this achievement were promotion to Major-General, the bestowal of the K.C.B., and a special medal. The Khedive also conferred upon him the Medjidie of the first class. He then paid a brief visit to England, where he discussed the Egyptian position thoroughly with the War Office. The Sudan had been re-entered, but it was manifest that the Khalifa's power was far from destroyed. Without hesitation it was, therefore, decided that the war must be prosecuted, and he was authorised to advance to Khartoum. With these instructions he was back in Egypt by December.

The first thing Sir Herbert Kitchener had to decide was the route to be taken. Of the old route by Korti and across the Bayuda Desert to Metemmeh, he already knew something; another feasible route from Suakin on the Red Sea to Berber was tempting by reason of its shortness; but both were discarded in favour of one of his own conception.

He had found that fighting the Dervish successfully was primarily a matter of transport. Throughout the Dongola campaign of 1896 the main channel of communication had been the Nile; all supplies from the base in Egypt had been brought to the front as far as possible by water, the railway and the pack animals being merely supplementary. But for the new advance the Nile was not always available, as, besides being long and tortuous, its course is frequently obstructed by cataracts, and some of its reaches are only navigable when the river is in flood.

Little wonder therefore, all things considered, that Kitchener formed the bold plan of constructing a railway as he went along. The question involved the whole strategy of the war. The line proposed to be taken left the Nile at Wady Halfa, struck across the Nubian Desert, meeting the curving Nile again at Abu Hamed, where a concentration could be effected, and the line of the river followed thence to Berber. The Khalifa was to be conquered by railway.

There is little of the element of romance in railway making; it does not take hold of the imagination like the glitter and movement, the colour

and excitement of the field of action. The long trailing line of communication often passes unnoticed. There were critics who denied the possibility of a desert railway, among them distinguished military engineers and eminent railway men in England. Croakers predicted nothing but ruin and disaster for any such attempt. But Kitchener had pinned his faith to the plan, and was resolved to carry it through.

Happily he got hold of the right man to carry out his idea. This was Lieutenant Girouard, a subaltern in the Royal Engineers, a modest young Canadian, who had had experience in track-laying on the Canadian Pacific line, and had come out to Egypt for the Dongola campaign.

Girouard was told to make the necessary estimates. 'Sitting in his hut at Wady Halfa he drew up a comprehensive list. Nothing was forgotten. Every want was provided for; every difficulty was foreseen; every requisite was noted.' The young engineer's estimates included and carefully accounted for everything a railway wanted: for the rails and the rolling stock; the points, the signals, and the lamps; the spare parts and the repairing machines; the oil, the coal, and, not the least requisite, the provision of a water supply. He then set out for England to purchase all these things, including in his first order fifteen new locomotives and two hundred trucks.

Sir Edouard P. C. Girouard, the talented railway builder, afterwards became a distinguished Colonial Governor, serving in this capacity in Northern Nigeria and in the East Africa Protectorate. Of his early relationship with Kitchener a characteristic story is told. One day while the young lieutenant was engaged on his railway building Kitchener came on the scene. 'How's this?' exclaimed the great man. 'Work suspended! You must go on; that line has to be finished as soon as mortal man can finish it.' 'Sorry, sir, I can't. The Government hasn't sent on the sleepers,' said Girouard in excuse. Replied Kitchener: 'I've no use for a man who says "can't." You had better go back to Cairo.' To Cairo he went, but Lord Kitchener wired him a week later to come back.

The first spadeful of sand of the Desert Railway was turned on the first day of 1897. New workshops were commenced at Halfa, and experienced mechanics were procured to direct them. Fifteen hundred additional men were enlisted in the Railway Battalion and trained to the work. The difficulties to be overcome were not of the ordinary railway-building type. Each engine employed had first to haul enough water to

carry it to Railhead and back, besides a reserve against accidents — for the surveys had disclosed only two spots where water was likely to be found in the desert. Then the feeding of the two thousand platelayers in a barren desert was in itself no easy problem. But it was solved, for the work had to be completed before the winter; and above all, the money voted was not to be outrun. The Sirdar attended strictly to every condition, not omitting the last.

A picture of the sun-baked solitudes in this land of appalling distances and utter aridity is thus given by Mr Winston Churchill in *The River War*: 'Level plains of smooth sand — a little rosier than buff, a little paler than salmon — are interrupted only by occasional peaks of rock, black, stark, and shapeless. Rainless storms dance tirelessly over the hot crisp surface of the ground. The fine sand, driven by the wind, gathers into deep drifts, and silts away among the dark rocks of the hills. The earth burns with the quenchless thirst of ages, and in the steel-blue sky scarcely a cloud obstructs the unrelenting triumph of the sun.'

Such was the terrible Nubian Desert into which the straight steel line began to stretch itself, from the clanging bustling sheds of Wady Halfa, out into the gleaming wastes, to a Rail-head which moved its camp farther away to the southward every day.

Each day there steamed out of Wady Halfa two trains to run the entire length of the finished road; the first brought all the material required to continue the construction; the second brought the food and water for the workmen and their slender guard.

Twice a day there appeared in the remote nothingness a black speck, which slowly grew larger and clearer, till a shrill whistle vibrated faintly from the distance — it was the oncoming train. So week in, week out, the work went on, and the line advanced uninterruptedly through the wilderness — to the one scene of life and animation in that savage and hoary desolation, the busy oasis of Rail-head. This moving and ever-lengthening destination was a canvas town of some 2500 inhabitants, complete with station, stores, post office, telegraph office, and canteen; a movable township which only those thin parallel streaks of iron connected with the living world of civilisation. Kitchener's sublime faith in his railway project seemed by some subtle influence to be communicated to the workers, who were encouraged and quickened by his constant presence 'on the job'; and the laborious work of construction

therefore proceeded not only with an unfailing and machine-like regularity, but with real economy and despatch.

As Abu Hamed grew near, the element of danger began to make itself felt — what if the Dervishes by a circuitous march should cut the line behind them? The problem no sooner presented itself for consideration than it was dealt with. A flying column, under General Hunter, was sent from Merawi along the river bank, and Abu Hamed was promptly stormed and captured. The work of construction was neither delayed nor interrupted. On 1st November the Sudan Military Railway arrived at Abu Hamed, and General Kitchener was again in unbroken communication with Cairo, both by rail and river. Even General Hunter's force, which was holding the place, began to drop its slender camel communication with Merawi, and draw all its supplies along the new line direct from Wady Halfa. As to the latter place, it had become a miniature Crewe, for the Desert Railway, in addition to being constructed, had to be maintained in working efficiency.

The next military operation to be considered was the seizure of Berber. But for some reason the place had already been evacuated by the Dervish forces; whereupon some friendlies had promptly occupied it, and it was only necessary now to send a company of black troops to reinforce them. In the abandonment of Berber the Khalifa appears to have been badly advised, for though a squalid town, it was an important position, and his lieutenant, the Emir Mahoud, might have concentrated here far more advantageously than nearer the Mahdist capital. Some people, however, said of this Berber episode that it was just another instance of 'Kitchener's luck.'

Then came the consideration of the advisability of extending the railway beyond Abu Hamed. Almost without hesitation it was decided to continue the line to Berber, and perhaps beyond that point to the junction of the Atbara with the Nile. The work of construction was therefore resumed, and for the first sixty miles the line ran beside the Nile at the edge of the riparian belt; on the right a cultivable though mostly uncultivated strip, dotted with palms and prickly mimosa bushes, beyond which the river gleamed refreshingly; on the left, nothing but desert broken by frequent rocks and dry water-courses. The iron road was deemed necessary, because it would have been far from wise to depend

on water communications, which at times were rendered unsafe by cataracts.

Mahmoud having withdrawn from Berber and somewhat mysteriously disappeared southward, a reconnaissance was made by way of the river to locate his position and discover his strength. The Sirdar sent his boats up to Metemmeh, the mud walls of which were well pounded by the guns. This having drawn a brisk rifle fire, and disclosed all it was necessary to learn, the boats withdrew, easily dropping down stream again, having lost only one man. The Dervishes, whose loss is believed to have reached 600 killed, not comprehending the manœuvre, and seeing the boats going back, came out to exult demonstratively, under the impression that they had repulsed the enemy. It was also ascertained that Osman Digna was close at hand, supporting his superior with a considerable force in Shendi, which was on the opposite or eastern bank of the Nile. The reconnaissance having proved completely successful, General Kitchener moved his outpost to Nakheila on the eastern bank of the Atbara; and at the same time, by arrangement with the Italians, garrisoned Kassala, conveniently situated about half-way between the river and the Red Sea.

While the Khalifa dallied, General Kitchener's efforts never relaxed for a single moment. Every preparation was completed, and every question — of supplies, of transport, of communications — had been finally settled. Nothing had been forgotten; patient and deliberate in preparation, he was now to be swift and certain in execution.

At last, while the Sirdar happened to be away north at Wady Halfa, came the long-expected news that the Dervishes were on the move. An advance in force to Berber was ordered, and a telegram sent to Cairo asking for a brigade of British soldiers to be sent to the front. Then the immense advantage of the Sudan Military Railway became apparent. While the Egyptian cavalry crossed the Bayuda Desert from Merawi, in the old slow way, battalion after battalion converged swiftly on the place of concentration by rail, among them four from the home army — Camerons, Seaforths, Warwicks, and Lincolns, the whole brigade being under Major-General Gatacre. On the day the first troop train steamed into the fortified camp at the confluence of the Nile and Atbara rivers, the doom of the Dervishes was sealed.

CHAPTER XVII — THE VICTORY AT THE ATBARA

WHEN Mahmoud marched to the Atbara, Kitchener struck camp, and placing himself between Mahmoud and the Nile, settled himself down twenty miles from his foe, and waited. No matter which line of advance the Dervishes selected, they were bound to be met, bound to be fought. And while his officers were consumed with the dread that Mahmoud would escape up the Atbara or across the desert, the way he had come, their chief had no fear. 'They dare not go back without fighting,' said he, when one ventured to inquire; 'they dare not! They would never be able to face their women!' It was perfectly true. Kitchener knew them.

The beginning of the end was the battle fought and won at the Atbara on the Good Friday of 1898, a feat which was practically the march of an overwhelming force into the position of a demoralised enemy. While the British camp was at Ras-al-Hud a number of successful reconnaissances had been made — by gunboat, by cavalry, and, not the least effective, by the friendly Jaalins, the mortal enemies of the brigand Baggaras, for whose blood they were just now thirsting, in revenge for the murders of their kinsfolk and the desolation of their homes. The alertness of the British General had easily foiled the attempt of Mahmoud and Osman, who were on the eastern side of the river, to make a flanking movement. While encamped at Abadar, some five miles nearer the enemy, whither Kitchener had moved his army on 4th April, the Egyptian troops gave their commander the most gratifying proofs of their quality, in the reconnaissance work to which he tentatively put them.

On 7th April General Kitchener moved still nearer the foe to Umdabia, where everything was put into immediate readiness for the dash on to the Arab zareba, seven miles away. The location, size, and strength of the zareba had been carefully ascertained by a daring reconnaissance made by four British officers a few days previously; and it was generally understood throughout the attacking force that the defence presented by the zareba, a thick barrier strongly constructed of desert thorns, was far more formidable than any earthwork known to modern warfare.

With mathematical precision and exactitude every preparation was now completed; a thorough survey of the ground had been made, and the best route decided upon; reliable leaders had been appointed, and vigilant patrolling commenced.

The undertaking began with a night march, in order that the engagement might be opened early in the morning and fought to its conclusion before the scorching African sun reached the midday sky. The army was drawn out at sunset, and moved forward in the darkness, making a brief halt at midnight. Soon after the march was resumed the enemy's camp-fires came into view; it was then about three o'clock, and the Sirdar watched the Arab's fortified enclosure from the edge of a plateau. There was apparently no stir there, though the presence of the attackers must have been known. On neither side was there anything in the shape of confusion; certainly no suspicion of panic, though the suspense was intense; and scarcely a sound broke the stillness till at half-past six the guns spoke out, and the bombardment began. For considerably more than an hour Mahmoud's doomed stronghold beside the dry bed of the Atbara was searched with shot and shell; and then the batteries having accomplished all that was demanded of them, the advance was sounded, and thirteen thousand infantry moved forward with confidence and military precision.

Towards those hurdles of dense prickly thorns, down a half-mile of sloping land, with bayonets gleaming, moved that mighty wave of warriors, all disciplined soldiers, though of various races — Maxwell's brigade, Macdonald's Sudanese, and the stiffening battalions of British. As they pressed nearer the zareba many were hit, but none wavered. Within a hundred yards of the Dervish stronghold the Egyptians and the Sudanese were not to be restrained, and they rushed furiously forward to the attack with loud and piercing yells. Not so the British. Maintaining their even pace, they marched steadily on with the traditional doggedness that has characterised them on so many fields, till they reached the face of the zareba; then, as had been previously arranged, the Cameron Highlanders spread themselves along it in a thin line, and set to work plucking away the piled thorn-bushes, to make way for their comrades to get at the enemy.

Steadily and irresistibly the disciplined soldiery swept into the entrenched Dervish enclosure, and got at once to close quarters with rifle

fire and bayonet work. With such grim determination was the assault made, so strenuously was the fighting maintained, that the day was won with a rapidity almost incredible — three-quarters of an hour after the bugles had sounded the advance, they sounded the cease fire!

The Khalifa's advance guard was utterly shattered, and his lieutenant, Mahmoud, a prisoner. The elusive Osman Digna had again escaped, flying southwards at the head of his Baggara horsemen. Forty Emirs and 3000 Dervishes lay dead on the field; on our side eighteen British officers were killed or wounded, and 500 other casualties were sustained.

The Atbara was a stiff and dangerous fight; for at one moment everybody who held a rifle was firing towards every point of the compass. Into that hell Kitchener rode, almost alone and quite unarmed, holding up his hand to stop the firing, and offering pardon to the still living remnant of the vanquished, who rushed out from trench and hut to throw themselves and their arms at his feet — as though instinctively they recognised the master spirit, and sought safety under its benign presence. Yet this was the man whom some critics afterwards did not hesitate to accuse of every crime against humanity, as willing to purchase a victory with any barbarity.

When it was all over, and the significance of the result fully realised, the troops cheered long, loud, and lustily. Then, observes an eye-witness of the scene, Herbert Kitchener was 'quite human for one-quarter of an hour,' relaxing that inscrutable countenance of his, just for one brief space, into something that bore the faint semblance of a smile. A victorious general in the first flush of triumph may be excused for allowing himself the luxury of appearing human.

The wearied troops, after their successful exertions, lay along the ridge, without the friendly shade of trees, in the oppressive African heat, for the rest of the day; they had marched light, with but a small water supply — that in the river was foul — and there was nothing else to be done but to await the cool of the evening.

The stench from the zareba was appalling. For a fortnight Mahmoud, fearing desertions, had forbidden his soldiers to leave the enclosure at night. Mules lay unburied, and the blazing sun had been beating down upon putrefaction for days. Now from 2600 more corpses the raw odour of new blood added a final horror.

The longest and most trying day comes to an end. The dead were then buried — unfortunately the wounded had suffered more than usual owing to the limited strength of the medical staff, a condition upon which the Sirdar had insisted in the interests of mobility — and the army made its tardy return to camp.

Throughout the fight Sir Herbert Kitchener had been under fire. The brilliancy of the action and the completeness of the defeat inflicted upon so redoubtable a foe brought him congratulatory telegrams from Queen Victoria, from the House of Commons, and from most of the crowned heads of Europe.

CHAPTER XVIII — KITCHENER ENCOUNTERS THE KHALIFA

THE scattered Dervishes retired on Omdurman. As nothing could be successfully attempted during the hot season, the Expeditionary Force went into summer quarters; the Egyptian army was distributed into three garrisons — the Atbara camp, Berber, and Abadia. The British brigade encamped at Darmali and Selim, two small villages.

The long period of inaction which followed was tedious and exceedingly comfortless to the home contingent, though on the Egyptians and Sudanese the summer heat had no more effect than upon the flies. Some of the British officers went home on short leave, but the Sirdar, engrossed with his task of preparing for the delivery of the final blow, steadfastly remained at hand with his army.

Kitchener's method of dealing with his chief prisoner, the Khalifa's lieutenant, presents a curious episode. 'As soon as he reached Berber after the victory, he held a parade of all the troops. A platform was erected and adorned with flags; on this, surrounded by his staff, the General took his stand. The Emir Mahmoud, his hands bound behind his back, was then compelled to march past at the head of the army, preceded by an enormous flag, on which was inscribed: "This is Mahmoud, who said he would take Berber."'

This strange historic episode was stigmatised as being altogether un-English, and the reverse of magnanimous. But if, to the Western mind it presents an unpleasant aspect, it was doubtless very effective, for no man knew better than Kitchener how best to impress the Arab mind; and the motive was transparently political.

Mahmoud's master, with those who had fallen back upon Omdurman, had now at his command a force calculated at upwards of fifty thousand fighting men. Having learnt from Osman Digna the terrible nature of the foe marching against him, he resolved to remain where he was and await his oncoming. And so, in military inactivity and gross sensual indulgence, he wore the time away in the palace of his new capital.

Meanwhile the Sirdar was carefully preparing and maturing his plans. By June he had continued his railway to his headquarters at Atbara Fort. Then supplies, stores, and war material of all sorts began to arrive there from Wady Halfa; and, last of all, fresh troops to reinforce the victors of Atbara.

Steadily and uninterruptedly the work for the final concentration and the grand attack to which it was to lead went forward week by week. By foresight, patience, and attention to the minutest detail, everything was planned to perfection; nothing was left to chance. When supplies for three months had been accumulated, and when the reinforcements had arrived, General Kitchener and his staff moved out of Atbara and formed a new camp at Wad Hamed, higher up the Nile, well within sixty miles of Omdurman, where the Khalifa was still awaiting eventualities.

In the 'army of Omdurman,' as it was styled from its principal objective, the Sirdar had under his orders 8000 British infantry and 15,000 Egyptians, or 23,000 infantry in all; two and a half batteries of artillery, including 5-inch howitzers, 40-pounder Armstrongs, 15-pounders, and Maxim guns; a British cavalry regiment, the 21st Lancers; about 1000 Egyptian cavalry; and 1000 of the Egyptian camel corps. The Lancers were employed as a cavalry corps under the direct orders of the commander of the forces, while the mounted 'Gippies' were led by Colonel Broadwood, a dashing cavalry officer of acknowledged ability. The infantry were organised in two British brigades — Wauchope's and Lyttleton's; and four Egyptian, under Macdonald, Maxwell, Lewis, and Collinson. The whole artillery was under the command of Colonel C. Long, a practical artillerist and noted horsemaster.

In numbers, the enemy were more than twice as strong. The Khalifa was supposed to have a large and trustworthy bodyguard of some 9000 blacks, fairly seasoned Sudanese troops officered by the sons of Sheiks and Emirs, whose allegiance was assured by the hostages thus given to the Khalifa. Then came a mass of Baggara spearmen and irregular cavalry, well proved in the past as reliable fighting stuff. In armament the Dervishes were comparatively very weak: their artillery, though including some Krupp guns, being generally old-fashioned; the small-arms, about 18,000 stand, included all manner of weapons, Remington breech-loaders being the best, and among the worst were smooth bores, shot guns, and even a few old elephant rifles. Ammunition was short

with them, leaden projectiles being particularly scarce; and the powder, though plentiful, was of inferior quality, being mostly 'homemade.'

Omdurman is on the western bank of the Nile, and Khartoum on the eastern, facing it. When the Expedition moved forward, the main force marched along the western bank of the river; on the eastern marched a miscellaneous horde of friendlies under the charge of Major Stuart Wortley; while between the two forces, up the great waterway, went the flotilla, comprising ten gunboats, five steamers, and a long string of laden barges and sailing boats in tow.

The men had found travelling up the Nile monotonous. All the way between Shillal and Halfa and Atbara and Wady Hamed each mile exactly resembled the last — low sandy banks, a fringe of date palms or else thorn-scrub and long grass, with occasional uninteresting mud villages, all of them appearing from the transport boats to be peopled by naked woolly-headed children.

As the Shabluka Gorge was approached there was some little anxiety as to the possibility of attack there; but the Khalifa failed to take advantage of his opportunity, and the little fleet made the passage safely and without interruption. Once through the gorge the gunboats were ready for mischief, while the land force had nothing between its broad front and the enemy's camp but the steep Kerreri Hills, at the foot of which a short halt was made. Then a last reconnaissance was made in force, almost precipitating hostilities. It was from this spot the signal-flag sent out the words 'Khartoum is in sight.' At last the Expeditionary Force had arrived at its supreme objective.

As soon as the advance was resumed and the shoulder of the hill turned, the dome of the Mahdi's tomb, in the centre of Omdurman, came into view in the steel-grey of the morning light. At first the vast expanse which was to be the scene of battle appeared to be deserted and destitute of life or movement; but presently, four miles away on the extreme right front, the long line of what appeared to be the enemy's zareba became visible. When the cavalry, covering the whole advance, worked down into the Kerreri Plains, the Dervish position came full into view.

As the distance lessened, the view became clearer; stir and movement among the enemy became discernible, and the zareba was found to be one of men, not of bushes. 'While we watched' (writes Lieutenant Churchill), 'amazed by the wonder of the sight, the whole face of the

slope became black with swarming savages. Four miles from end to end, and as it seemed in five great divisions, this mighty army advanced — swiftly. The whole side of the hill seemed to move. Between the masses horsemen galloped continually; before them many patrols dotted the plain; above them waved hundreds of banners; and the sun glinting on many thousand hostile spear-points spread a sparkling cloud. It was an awe-inspiring and formidable sight.’

The centre and main force of the army was composed of regular troops formed in squares, a body comprising 12,000 black riflemen, and about 13,000 black and Arab spearmen, a dark green flag rising in their midst. In the centre followed the Khalifa with a bodyguard 2000 strong. A south wind carried the martial sound of drums and horns, now some three miles away.

At eleven o’clock the gunboats engaged the enemy’s batteries. The forts, mounting nearly fifty guns, replied vigorously; but the British aim was too good; the great wall of Omdurman was breached in numerous places, and presently the Mahdi’s tomb, which the Dervishes believed to be indestructible, was hit, its dome and cupolas being smashed to dust. When the lower forts were silenced, the Jaalin — the only really trustworthy men in Major Wortley’s force — were ordered to clear out the villages there. In doing this they took the opportunity of executing vengeance upon some hundreds of their tribal enemies whom they found in them; their officers were quite unable to restrain them. In the meantime the great army of Dervishes had been majestically advancing, and it appeared that a collision would be inevitable in less than an hour. Expectation was on tip-toe.

It was midday, 1st September; the results of many years of preparation, and of three years of actual war, were about to be put to the test. But at a quarter to two the Dervish army halted. Their drill had been excellent, and they all stopped at a single command. Then suddenly their riflemen discharged their pieces in the air — it was just a barbaric *feu de joie*. After this every man lay down on the ground, and it became evident the matter was not to be settled that day. An hour or so later the enemy had encamped, and no attack was to be looked for until daybreak.

The gunboats returned from their successful errand, and were now moored to the bank. Night closed in; not a man in the Anglo-Egyptian army, encamped within four miles of the fierce and fanatical enemy they

had come so far to meet, but lay down to rest with unabated confidence in the leader whose clear judgment had never yet failed them. But would there be a night attack? The contemplation of even that possibility did not disturb them in the least.

It is a regular practice of Kordofan fighting-men to attack by night. Now nothing is more dangerous than a night attack, when friend often kills friend; contradictory orders are given, and confusion reigns supreme. At close quarters there are no better fighting men in the world than these fanatical Dervishes. Kitchener had taken all the necessary precautions; he arrived on 1st September instead of the 7th — a change of plan which threw the Khalifa, well-informed as he was of the Sirdar's movements, out of his reckoning. The effort had the additional effect of making the arrival coincide with the period of full moon.

When that morning, at half-past nine, the Sirdar had ridden to the summit of 'Signal Hill,' he saw before him, for the first time, not more than three miles off, the whole army of 50,000 Dervishes, with all their banners, lances, and standards displayed, moving forward. It was a critical moment, for the Anglo-Egyptian army had only just taken up its camp, and was in no fighting formation. That, however, was a comparatively trifling matter. The lines were rapidly formed, and in a short time a fair zareba had been made. When that was finished, if the enemy had attacked by daylight, there was no reason to be anxious; if they intended a night attack, the General doubtless knew it, and was equally prepared for it.

As all the world now knows, the Khalifa did not make a night attack; perhaps the full moon, and a knowledge of the searchlights on the gunboats helped to deter him. But a greater surprise came in the morning when his intention to attack in the open, and not behind the walls of the city, became evident. He had been led by every means to believe that he would be attacked in the early morning of 2nd September, which may perhaps account for his own hopeless onslaught on that day.

By six o'clock the whole Dervish mass was in motion; the full power of Mahdism was advancing swiftly to the attack. Then above the distant noise of their shouting came a tremendous roar — their guns had opened the engagement. The British and Egyptian force was arranged in line, with its back to the river, and its flank secured by the gunboats.

The solid Dervish division advanced rapidly over the hill, and were not to be stayed by our guns, which had opened fire in reply to theirs. The challengers still came on, eager to strike; a deadly rifle-fire which strewed the plain with fallen men, almost failed to check them. Carefully watching the progress of the fight, and fearing that, when they did begin to waver, the Dervishes might fall back to fight behind the walls, General Kitchener entrusted the task of preventing this to the 21st Lancers. The manœuvre was executed brilliantly, but not without many casualties — two or three thousand Arab swordsmen being suddenly encountered in a *khor* or dry water-course which lay directly in their path. This loss helped to cripple the pursuit of the enemy after the battle was won. At the beginning of the action the Khalifa had prudently posted a force on his extreme right to prevent his line of retreat being harassed.

The tide of battle now began to rise fast. The Khalifa and his flag, surrounded by at least 10,000 men, advanced, and the engagement became general.

While the 21st Lancers were reconnoitring Surgham Ridge, and the field was still held by 35,000 of the enemy, the Sirdar set his brigades in motion towards Omdurman, and at 9.15 a.m. the whole army was marching south in echelon. It was when the British topped the crest of the ridge, and the whole panorama of Omdurman — the brown and battered dome of the Mahdi's tomb, the multitude of mud houses, the glittering fork of water that marked the confluence of the rivers — burst on their vision, that they got the first news of the Lancers' charge. The details followed in the shape of the wounded, who in twos and threes began to make their way between the battalions, all covered with blood, and many displaying the most terrible wounds — faces cut to rags, bowels protruding, fish-hook spears still stuck in their bodies — realistic pictures from the darker side of war.

The charge of the 21st Lancers (not unfittingly nicknamed 'the Saucy Devils'), under Colonel Martin, was undoubtedly the great incident of the engagement. Not more than 300 strong, they had charged and ridden through 2000 Dervishes. Those of their number who fell were simply hacked to pieces by the swords of their enemies; yet having got to the far side of the lane they had cut for themselves, they re-formed as coolly as if they had been on parade at Aldershot.

The Arab army, fierce, reckless, and fanatical, inspired with deadly hatred of their unbelieving enemies, charged again and again with a determined impetuosity that would have been trying to the most seasoned troops. But the Sirdar's men, drawn up in solid formation, and armed with rifles and Maxim guns, met every assault with admirable coolness, inflicting heavy losses upon the attackers.

Then surged into view, round the base of the hill, the whole of the Khalifa's reserve of 15,000 men, the flower of the Dervish army. They came swiftly on in a solid mass, the brunt of their onslaught being borne by Macdonald's Sudanese, who remained remarkably steady, although only as one to seven, till the Sirdar sent them assistance.

The firing again became tremendous; and though the Dervish attack was fierce and formidable, it quite failed to roll back the tide of war which was now beginning to sweep them from the field. The musketry fire had inflicted terrible losses in their crowded ranks — they wavered, they were repulsed, and the surviving thousands began to struggle away in the direction of Omdurman, to swell a stream of fugitives upon whose flank the 21st Lancers already hung vengefully.

Events were moving rapidly, and the stage upon which they were being enacted was a large one. Many scenes of heroism, of devotion, of reckless courage, happened that day, but none more dramatic, more tragic, than that of the Holy Ensign.

After the charge of the Dervish horsemen, who were annihilated, the Khalifa's infantry advanced. Not disheartened, but incited by the fate of the horsemen, they came on, sweeping along the side of the valley like a seething torrent. It was the last assault, and the Khalifa's banner was borne in the centre of the line. Shot and shell rattled and hissed from the Maxims and guns on the ridge commanding the valley, making great gaps in the white jebba-clad ranks.

A few more rounds; the Maxims and artillery descended to the plain; and then was witnessed an act of devoted courage not easily paralleled in the history of romance. Round the Khalifa's flag, the dark blue raya embroidered with pious sentences, there lay a heap of slain warriors, mowed down by the machine guns and rifles. Two alone remained. Khalifa Abdullai had fled. They stood there, each man with a hand on the flag staff, unharmed, facing the storm of lead and iron. Then one of the two fell, shot through the body.

For a moment his grasp on the sacred flag was loosened. Putting forth all his strength and raising himself on his knees, he grasped it once more, and so held the colours aloft till death released him from the duty. His comrade was left to guard the banner alone. The flag-staff clasped in his left hand, he stood there alone, making no sign. It was like a figure of stone, with face turned toward the foe. Presently he fell, and after the conflict had ceased, thirty corpses lay round the flag, that of the heroic warrior who fell last being pierced by more than a dozen bullets.

When the fighting was over, the cost came to be counted. The Dervishes had 10,800 killed and 16,000 wounded; while the losses of the British and Egyptian forces amounted only to 47 killed and 342 wounded. The wide margin of difference is significant, and offers much food for reflection. The Arab army had had enough of fighting against an enemy fully equipped with all the weapons and resources of modern warfare. The annihilation of the Khalifa's army was the climax. The fighting had begun at half-past five in the morning, and was all over before noon.

Kitchener had made up his mind that the enemy should have no rest. He had got them 'on the run,' and meant to keep them moving till he had taken and entered their capital. In spite of the heavy defeat, the Khalifa's army, driven on by fanaticism, might still come together again as a fighting force, and this Kitchener determined must not take place. The objective, be it remembered, was the Khalifa's capital, and the battle *en route* was, so to speak, merely an incident — though an exceedingly important one — by the way. No opportunity was to be given the Arabs of collecting their disorganised forces, even supposing the terrible punishment they had received at Omdurman had left them with sufficient energy and doggedness to renew the fight.

After a halt, and the watering of the troops, the march towards the Khalifa's new capital was resumed.

It was a bold decision to march right away into Omdurman, when the town was full of fighting men, the day more than half spent, and no reconnaissance possible, owing to mirage. But had the entry been delayed till twenty-four hours later, serious resistance might have been offered, and a house-to-house, street-to-street fight, would undoubtedly have resulted in very heavy losses.

To Major Wingate, the ablest of Intelligence Officers, fell the happy duty of sending to England the telegraphic despatch announcing the great victory at Omdurman; no message of the kind ever electrified a nation more, or gave more widespread satisfaction.

CHAPTER XIX — FASHODA

THE city of Omdurman was formally surrendered to the Sirdar as he rode up at the close of the battle on 2nd September. Three men advanced slowly to meet the victorious general. They knelt in the roadway, and presented him with the keys of the city, of the arsenal, of the prison, and the various public buildings. He accepted their surrender and spoke words of peace. Rising swiftly, the men shouted out the good news, and thereupon from every house men, women, and children appeared, joyfully relieved from fear.

It was after four o'clock that the entry into the city was made, the Sirdar, attended by his whole staff, with the dark flag of the Khalifa carried behind him, and accompanied by the band of a Sudanese regiment, riding in front of a black battalion. The bold front assumed for this ceremony was fully justified. Immediately the keys had been presented and the conqueror's clemency announced, numbers of the people rushed forward and kissed the boots of the officers; Slatin Pasha was nearly pulled from his horse by numbers of his old friends — and recent enemies — who fawned upon him. The Sirdar himself received a royal welcome from the city he had taken; the cheers of the populace were long, loud, and strikingly demonstrative — and this was in the heart and headquarters of Mahdism, to the destruction of which, as a military power, all his efforts had been directed.

A few irreconcilables still lurked about the streets, and these kept the rifles of the Sudanese busy all the afternoon. But the bulk of the Khalifa's scattered host got away with him, going in the direction of El Obeid; only the lack of an adequate cavalry force prevented the pursuit of this multitude of exasperated savages, numbering not less than 20,000.

Inside the city, which was occupied that night, many awful and ghastly sights met the eye; on every hand were destruction, confusion, filth, and the all-pervading stench of putrefaction. In a number of places lay heaps of surrendered weapons, some thrown down by sullen warriors, many delivered up by willing deserters. The open space in front of the Mahdi's tomb — the destruction of which was calculated as much as anything to

impress the superstitious townsfolk — was filled with troops. Order was gradually being restored, to replace the disorders, excesses, and iniquities of the deposed Khalifa.

Omdurman was disappointing. It had been hoped to find decent dwellings of stone or other material, but the town was not very different, except in size, from the mud villages passed all along the river. There was really nothing to see in Omdurman, and on Sunday, the 4th of September, most of the English officers took steamer up to Khartoum. A landing was effected opposite the remains of Gordon's house, where a service was held. Khartoum, as a town, had ceased to exist; it was one mass of ruins. Gordon's house still stood, but minus its roof; the orange-gardens with which it was surrounded made the scene, sad as it was, a refreshing change from Omdurman, where there was not even a bush.

The service was as much a ceremonial parade as a religious observance, for had not the Expedition, in popular parlance at least, 1 Gone to Khartoum to avenge Gordon? And now, after fourteen long years of deliberate preparation and purposeful effort, had not the hour of consummation arrived?

Yet there was a subdued solemnity in the proceedings, such a depth of feeling in the whole observance, that no one who took part in the Expedition, and was present at Khartoum that Sunday, will ever forget it. Probably not a man present but conjured up the image of the dead hero, as depicted in Tennyson's epitaph upon him:—

*Warrior of God, man's friend, and tyrant's foe,
Now somewhere dead far in the waste Sudan,
Thou livest in all our hearts, for all men know
This earth has never borne a nobler man.*

'It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast' (writes one who was present that day) 'than between Kitchener in the saddle, with work still remaining to be done, and the same man, his task completed, standing under the shadow of the great tree on the river front before Gordon's ruined palace on the 4th September. He was softened, gentle, almost affectionate to all; and those — there were many — who had often misjudged and misunderstood him, must have at last realised that down in that often forbidding and always stern and self-reliant nature, there was a soft spot, and a human sympathy, of which they had not believed him capable.'

On 6th September the camp was broken up, and the boats were soon speeding back down the river, the British going home, only the native troops remaining. The Sirdar made a speech to the Lancers before they left, in which he complimented them very highly upon the historic charge they had made the other day, and wished them a pleasant march down to the Atbara. With pleasant words like these, the return of the British division commenced without delay.

But if the climax had been reached, all was not over yet. There was still considerable clearing up to be done. The enemy had been defeated, but the territory had yet to be reconquered.

Two expeditions were forthwith despatched, up the White and the Blue Niles respectively, to establish garrisons. These expeditions and operations also were successful. General Kitchener went with that up the White Nile, in personal command, starting on 8th September, towards Fashoda, with five steamers.

In 1896 a French expedition had penetrated from the Atlantic side into the heart of Africa. A rumour had reached General Kitchener that a European force was encamped somewhere up the river; and when his flotilla had splashed its way for ten days through a country of mud flats alternating with dense scrub, a country damp and feverish, steaming under a burning sun and humming with insect life, he was not greatly surprised to see a small steel rowing-boat coming down stream to meet them.

It contained a Senegalese sergeant and two men, with a letter from Major Marchand, who was in charge of the French Mission, announcing the arrival of French troops and their formal occupation of the Sudan. The message also congratulated the Sirdar on his victory, and courteously welcomed him to Fashoda in the name of France.

Marchand's party consisted of eight French officers and 120 Senegalese black soldiers, equipped with three small steel boats and a steam launch. They had no artillery, and their ammunition and supplies were getting low. Their relief at the arrival of a European force was undisguised. Two years had passed since they left the Atlantic, and for six months they had been lost to human ken. They had climbed mountains, pierced gloomy forests, fought savages, and struggled with fever; in the course of which a fifth of their number had perished. But on 10th July they had planted the French flag on the Upper Nile.

Sir Herbert Kitchener and his officers were prepared to admire and honour these heroic achievements, but the French claims to sovereignty, the Sirdar gracefully waived aside.

When the boats arrived at Fashoda Major Marchand, with a guard of honour, came to meet the General. The two shook hands warmly. 'I congratulate you,' said the Sirdar, 'on all you have accomplished.' 'No,' replied the Frenchman, pointing to his troops, 'it is not I, but these soldiers who have done it.' Kitchener, in recounting the episode afterwards, remarked, 'Then I knew he was a gentleman.'

Major Marchand has recorded the dialogue on that memorable occasion, when war between England and France trembled in the balance. It was one of the great dialogues of history — so polite, so diplomatic, so fraught with immense consequences. The French flag floated over the fort; but the Egyptian flag must fly in its place. So said the Sirdar. The Major was firm; the Sirdar was firm also. Beneath the politeness was the clash of two nations. The conversation ended with a whisky and soda — and the Egyptian flag floating over the fort of Fashoda.

Marchand undoubtedly had the approval and support of his Government; but the Sirdar calmly ignored the French flag, and left the settlement of the affair to diplomacy. In England and in France, when the news of this meeting came to hand, feeling ran very high; and both countries at one time seemed bent on risking a war for the possession of this wretched desert settlement. In the end, better feelings prevailed, and the French magnanimously withdrew.

This somewhat ugly international dispute, it may be recalled, was finally terminated by an Agreement, signed 21st March, 1899, by Lord Salisbury and M. Cambon.

After fraternising with the Frenchmen, the Sirdar continued his journey to the south, leaving Colonel Jackson in charge of Fashoda, with the Egyptian and British flags now flying over it, in place of the French tricolour.

The gunboats proceeded as far as the mouth of the Sobat, sixty-two miles from Fashoda, which was reached next day. Here also the twin flags of Egypt and Britain were hoisted, another post formed, and a garrison left to hold the place. The expedition then turned back; and on

the return two gunboats were left at the disposal of Colonel Jackson, as commandant of the Fashoda district.

By the signal triumph achieved at Omdurman, and not a little by the aid of the Desert Railway, the situation in the whole Nile Valley had been revolutionised. The reconquered territory, after having suffered all the tortures of war, was put in the way of achieving that for which so long it had thirsted — peace and plenty, and the blessings of civilisation.

Thus had Great Britain and Egypt moved hand in hand up the mighty river, sharing, though unequally, the cost of a regenerative war in men and money. The allied conquerors became joint possessors; the Sudan did not become precisely Egyptian again — Egypt itself not possessing an independent administration — but an entirely new political status was found for it, both countries retaining an equal interest in the territory and sharing the responsibility of it — a result which certainly strengthened the grasp of England upon Egypt.

Egypt is sometimes said to be the gift of the Nile. From the very earliest times the rise and fall of its waters have been eagerly watched by the inhabitants. Its fertilising mud has been allowed to spread over the land or has been conducted by irrigation canals to the fields: without it, Egypt would cease to be the rich land it is, and become as the surrounding desert.

Since the country depends on the Nile, it is essential to its welfare — nay, to its very existence — that the sources of the river shall not fall into the hands of any foreign power. The keynote of successful government for Egypt and the Sudan is — the whole or nothing. Besides, the Sudan south of Khartoum is well worth protecting and cultivating. Sir Samuel Baker spoke of it as one of the world's most productive granaries; two crops of corn are raised in a year; and it is rich in cotton, tobacco, coffee, and maize, the regions round Khartoum being sometimes called the Gardens of the Sudan.

But fourteen years of barbarism and licence had now to be civilised away — here lay the first sphere of usefulness for the projected Gordon Memorial College. The beneficial results of British rule in Egypt are incontestable; the same standard had now to be maintained in the equatorial provinces.

The campaign having been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, Kitchener was called upon to exercise some of the qualities of

statesmanship, and again he showed conspicuous ability. It is everywhere acknowledged that he dealt with the Fashoda incident in a masterly manner, and he was afterwards no less successful in beginning in the Sudan the new order of things, which rescued that devastated region from the long spell of primitive barbarism into which it had lapsed.

CHAPTER XX — A MUCH CRITICISED COMMANDER

STRONG as Lord Kitchener had proved himself, by many persons he was accounted lucky in the opportunities which came to him. But the lucky man is the one who makes his own luck by seizing his opportunities. Kitchener had created order out of chaos in the Egyptian army, though it must not be forgotten that his two predecessors — Sir Evelyn Wood and General Grenfell — had done much previously, and that a very good fighting force was placed in his hands when he became Sirdar.

It was also his good fortune to be in command when the time came to test the real capability of the machine. This he used to the best effect and with the utmost economy. Yet, according to the critics, he neither displayed, nor had the opportunity of displaying, any great qualities of generalship in strategy or tactics.

In the Khartoum Expedition it was a superior civilisation, actuated by unflinching forethought and cool calculation, which crushed a semi-barbarous foe, inspired by superb bravery and a fanatical disregard of death, which more than compensated for an inferior armament.

No bravery, no fanaticism, no leaders could possibly have made the Khalifa's advance successful. Everything was in our favour. The enemy's white uniform could not have had a background which showed it up better than the dark brown sand and rock of the hills over which they came. Our men knew every range to a yard, for they had had ample time to take them and check them again and again. They were perfectly fresh, not having marched that day, and had all had a comfortable breakfast. Lastly, and most important of all, every officer and man of that allied army reposed absolute confidence in their leader, the Sirdar.

Not that the Anglo-Egyptian army had an easy task; for in previous encounters even all-British troops had not been invariably successful against the Dervishes. The result turned out as it did just because the expedition had been conducted in a masterly manner by a skilful leader — even losses by sickness and casualty had been reduced to the lowest minimum, and from beginning to end no day had ever seen a shortage of

rations, or a failure of transport. That his medical service and hospital accommodation were as adequate as the circumstances and conditions of the undertaking would allow — a point on which adverse criticism has been made — is quite manifest from the pages of a work published in 1899, and entitled *With Kitchener's Army*, written by Owen Spencer Watkin, Acting Wesleyan Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces.

Among the results of the victory were the two directly aimed at — the extinction of Mahdism, and the submission of the whole country which had formerly been under Egyptian authority.

The victory has generally been acclaimed as a brilliant feat of arms. Mr G. W. Steevens, the *Daily Mail* correspondent, produced the earliest, if not one of the cleverest, works on the campaign; it was issued in the October of 1898. His criticisms were slashing, and not altogether complimentary to the General, the points advanced by him being that the charge of the Lancers was a heroic piece of folly, and that the cutting up of the Lancers and of the Camel Corps were disasters, inasmuch as they prevented the pursuit and capture of the Khalifa. Besides the misadventure of the 21st Lancers already mentioned, the Camel Corps had got into difficulties very early in the day, when trying to move over some rocky ground. In the opinion of this critic the Sirdar ought to have kept his cavalry and camelry out of the battle at all hazards; he says they were not wanted there, that their use entailed an unnecessary loss of life, while when they were wanted afterwards they were not forthcoming.

Another unsparing critic was the Right Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill, then a mere boy of twenty-three, serving as a lieutenant. To check his ambition and humble his youthful pride, instead of having a troop given him to lead, he had been put in charge of a mess store. But he made no demur; it was his object to write a big book on the campaign, which he did in *The River War*. Several times already have its ample and authoritative pages been quoted, and it only remains to add that they contain a very bold and outspoken attack on Kitchener for the desecration of the Mahdi's body.

Ordinary people may be allowed to regard the battle of Omdurman as a military success; the hero of it certainly reaped the rewards of a successful general. And as nothing succeeds like success, so is there nothing like success to breed envy and to challenge carping criticism. Probably no achievement in the field of arms ever aroused so much

controversy in newspaper and magazine as did Kitchener's reconquest of the Sudan.

Some of those who raised the chorus of criticism seemed to forget that though in these days an English general might make mistakes, he always remained a high-minded and chivalrous gentleman.

A protest was raised that unauthorised camp followers were permitted to loot and massacre under the eyes of a British General; and it was asserted that after the battle, not only did Arab pillagers kill with bullets, and even clubs, poor wounded wretches who had crawled under the scanty shade of rock or scrub for shelter, but that Sudanese troops despatched scores of wounded men who lay in their path. The same witness testified that he had seen over and over again a wounded Baggara raise himself from the ground and fire his Remington at any enemy he could aim at, and that one Dervish suddenly rose up and stabbed no fewer than seven Egyptian cavalymen before he was despatched. Many extraordinary instances of fanatical hatred and cold-blooded butchery were reported, and the question was openly asked by the military critics, whether the Sirdar really believed that the destruction of the wounded was a military necessity forced upon him by the treacherous action of the wounded Dervishes. Could the rules of war be fully observed in dealing with these brave but treacherous foemen?

Practically every Arab on that field fought to the death, giving no quarter and asking none. It is not denied that numbers of them were killed, in error, without the knowledge and despite the efforts of the British officers. A certain amount of cruelty and hardship is always inseparable from war, and seldom fails to give rise to controversy. On this occasion it was particularly bitter and very pointed; but through it all Kitchener remained perfectly indifferent, uttering not one word to appease the fault-finders.

One apologist (who perhaps lays himself open to a charge of special pleading) sets forth, as excuses for the excesses committed, that the expedition was made up of British soldiers anxious to avenge Gordon; of Sudanese, in whom the desire to loot is strongly developed; of Egyptians, who had many old scores to pay off; and of the friendly Jaalin, whose blood was still boiling over the massacre at Metemmeh, in which some 2000 of the pick of the tribe fell victims to the savagery of the Khalifa and his lieutenant, Mahmoud.

Another incident which called forth harsh criticism at the time was the bombarding of the Mahdi's tomb, the white dome of which was torn to pieces by Lyddite shells. It is alleged, and apparently it was true, that the Mahdi's embalmed body was dug up, the head wrenched off, and the trunk cast into the Nile. Another searching question was then asked: Was the violation of graves worthy of a Christian man and a British General?

As to that, war in no phase can be accepted as a Christian pursuit; and it is certainly immoral in every phase of it.

One journalist censured the Sirdar for having given permission to loot the granaries of Omdurman; but this critic did not know that the permission was given to the starving women and children in the town; a great portion of the inhabitants of Omdurman at the time consisted of people who had been compelled by the Khalifa to quit their lands and fields south of Berber and come into the town. These people recognised the entry of the troops into the city as their hour of deliverance from a tyrant.

It seems also to have been forgotten that General Kitchener ordered the inhabitants of Omdurman to go out and fetch men lying on the battlefield, who were unable to come in themselves; and that for days afterwards the townsmen were bringing in wounded on beds, or on their backs. The Sirdar also gave his sanction to the erection of a temporary hospital for Dervishes quite near to the British camp.

War is a stern game, and he who would play it successfully should not be over-troubled with the bowels of compassion. Kitchener has always been a warrior who plays to win. Let it never be forgotten, too, that secrecy was ever a guiding principle with Kitchener, as with all good military commanders; and newspaper correspondents were kept well under control. Which may account not a little for the hubbub they raised.

When the Khalifa fled, he was accompanied by his principal wife and a few attendants; eight miles from Omdurman a score of swift camels awaited him, and on these he rejoined the main body of his routed army. Most of his surviving Emirs rallied to his side. It was not till the following year that the capture of Abdullahi was attempted, an honourable and difficult but unsuccessful enterprise entrusted to Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Kitchener.

By the close of the year 1898 Lord Kitchener was back again in Cairo, with the added title of Governor-General of the Sudan. In the new year

further operations, entailing some desultory fighting, were found necessary for the clearance of the Soudan provinces, and the attempted capture of the Khalifa — operations successfully undertaken by Sir Francis Wingate and Colonel Parsons. The former presently became Sirdar in place of Lord Kitchener, who was called away to South Africa. In the meantime the railway had been pushed on into Khartoum, carried across the Atbara by a very fine bridge, which was opened with some ceremony by Lord Kitchener himself, 26th August, 1899.

Occasionally a flicker of excitement was occasioned when news — generally false — came of the whereabouts of the Khalifa, and the probability or otherwise of his capture was a standing subject of conversation. At last tidings came that his followers were deserting him. Soon he was so hard pressed that his wives were being left behind — and then a most important capture was made, his principal wife, Fatima, falling into our hands.

It fell to Sir Francis Wingate to strike the final blow at Mahdism. A reconnoitring party of Arab horsemen had at last located the Khalifa's whereabouts, and making a forced moonlight march the Egyptian force came upon him. The Dervish camp was soon aroused, and for the last time the Dervish drums and horns sounded the challenge to battle.

The Mahdists were under no delusion as to the hopelessness of their position. They had never recovered from the terrific defeat at Omdurman, and, though most of the Khalifa's chiefs had joined him after the rout, the success of the British troops must have preyed upon their minds. They had expected to sweep the unbelievers from the land, but found to their surprise that they themselves had to flee before their hated foes. Yet no one could say they were deficient in courage: the reverse, indeed, was the case.

The Khalifa and his Emirs, true to their war-like instincts, made a gallant stand. Seeing the position was hopeless, he told his Emirs to stay with him and die. Then spreading a sheepskin on the ground, he sat upon it, his Emirs grouping themselves on his right and on his left, all dying unflinchingly together. And so, exit Mahdism, 24th November, 1899.

CHAPTER XXI — CIVILISING THE SUDAN

AT the close of October, 1898, General Kitchener started back to England, having been on the 21st of that month raised to the peerage as Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, and promoted to a G.C.B. Parliament made him a grant of £30,000, and he was voted the thanks of both Houses. He had achieved the reputation of being an abnormally skilful organiser and the most promising General in the British Army. It was a refreshing novelty to the English nation to have had a war — a prolonged one, too — conducted on businesslike methods and economical principles. Lord Kitchener was the coming man.

There was no hero-worship about all this. The reward was inevitable. Reflection recalled how Sir Herbert Kitchener had led up to the achievement by his cool calculation and dogged persistence. Who drew out the plan for the expedition, calculated the Moslem forces, and drilled into high military form those Egyptian troops who, a few years before, were regarded as effeminate and useless? It was not done by a conclave, but by the individual whom now the Queen delighted to honour.

So soon as General Kitchener had finished his campaign against the Dervishes, he began the more difficult task of re-making the Egyptian Sudan, the two instruments he selected for the work being education and the railway. The latter, already well begun, was continued, and became the first section of that great civilising influence known as the Cape to Cairo line. His project of establishing a college at Khartoum, besides being an important factor in his comprehensive scheme of education, formed a very fitting tribute to the memory of Gordon.

Arriving in England in November, he met with the most enthusiastic reception, and was entertained by the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House, where he was presented with the freedom of the city and a sword of honour, the usual English triumph of a victorious general. By his services, and the crowning achievement at Omdurman, he had won an indisputable right to a place in that roll of honour which includes the illustrious names of Nelson and Wellington, of Colin Campbell and Napier, of Wolseley and Roberts.

Evidently Lord Kitchener has little regard for the view that the Arab is the inveterate foe of civilisation; that the hard intolerance and unenergising fatalism (the spiritual product of centuries of desert life) have left him little aptitude and less desire for the arts and sciences of Western life.

This is shown by the fact that, taking advantage of these demonstrations of popular favour, he asked the public to raise a fund of £100,000 for the founding and endowment of a college to be built at Khartoum, as a memorial to Gordon, for the education and training of Egyptians and Sudanese. The scheme was universally approved, and when he returned to Egypt, he took with him the whole of the sum required for the purpose; in fact, a sum in excess of the amount he had asked for.

Though it was felt Lord Kitchener had underestimated the amount of money his project would require, the proposal was one which touched the national imagination. The only fear expressed was that he had struck the wrong note in purposing to give his education in English, which would lose much, if not all, of its vivifying power. He was told that no race will ever be civilised through teaching in a tongue in which it does not think. And this was practically the only protest his very laudable project raised.

Lord Cromer laid the foundation of the Sirdar's College at Khartoum, on 5th January, 1899, in the presence of a large number of Sheiks and other notables, and in his address admirably set forth the central purpose of that institution. 'It is important by healthy moral associations to elevate the character of the body of native officials, who, it is hoped, will eventually be able to bear an honourable and useful part in the administration of the country ... The object of the college is not to create a race of Anglicised Sudanese, but rather, in the first place, to train the mind.'

It was obvious that for some time the college would have to devote itself to elementary education, ultimately giving its attention to agriculture, engineering, and other practical arts which would be most useful to the people of the country. Great interest in the college and its future influence on the Sudan was manifested by all who hoped the arts of peace might no longer be sacrificed to the demands of war which for so many years had ravaged and devastated the country.

In December Lord Kitchener was appointed Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Sudan. Then was shown the constructive side of his character; hitherto known chiefly as a soldier and an organiser, he now gave abundant evidence of his ability as a town-planner and sanitary engineer. In the last-named capacities he designed the new Khartoum; and, to quote Major Stanton, 'he hit on principles of municipal ownership which anticipated Mr John Burns's Town-planning Act, and devised a system of radiating streets, which has the approval of the latest school.' He had attained to that pinnacle of greatness which exclaims, 'I have won a battle — I will build a city!'

Civilisation began to make rapid progress, Khartoum presenting to the whole of Central Africa an interesting object-lesson in peaceful progress. This wonderful city could, by 1902, be reached in five days from Assuan by an efficient if not luxurious railway service. The trains were fitted not only with excellent dining and sleeping cars, but at Abu Hamed, after a long run of monotonous sandy track, luxuriant baths are unexpectedly supplied. The first section of the line from Halfa to Abu Hamed runs in a perfectly straight line along the level, pathless desert, weird and arid, where the sand is of a reddish tint, and the sun like a fiery ball rolling above a desolate, never-ending waste. There is no more welcome sound than that heard on the Cape-to-Cairo Railway, when, at the termination of this section, a tap on the sleeping-car door wakes the traveller and the attendant inquires, 'Bath, sir, hot or cold?'

Let it not be forgotten that in 1885 Khartoum had been razed to the ground, remaining a heap of ruins till the taking of the new Dervish capital — Omdurman — the savagery of which had constituted a menace to African civilisation. On 10th January, 1900, the first 'through train' ran from Cairo to Khartoum.

Mr Douglas Sladen, in an inspiring article, entitled 'The Footsteps of Gordon at Khartoum,' has given us a very pleasant picture of that Mid-African city, as it appears to-day under British administration and direction. He dubs it 'the capital of the Young Men's Country — the Tropical Utopia.'

Round the spot where Gordon fell rises the greatest city of tropical Africa, in three towns: Khartoum, with its palaces of administration, its British soldiers and its British homes; Khartoum North, with its arsenal,

dockyards, and factories; and Omdurman, with its swarms of busy Sudanese traders, happy and prosperous.

Khartoum stands on the tongue of land formed by the junction of the White and Blue Niles, this fortification being drawn across the peninsula a few miles above the junction. At high Nile only the lofty bank of the Blue Nile, on which the British city stands, is above water.

It is now 'a city of gardens, which are the flowerings of peace ... There is a vast square of palms and flowers, the flaming flowers of the tropics; the high road out of Khartoum into the recesses of the Ghezireh, the island between the two Niles, runs through it, crossed by other and lesser roads, all of velvety white sand. And in the centre of the cross the figure of the Knight of the Cross, riding the Camel of the Orient, with the head-dress of the Orient on his devoted head, towers into the sky, the brazen sky of Africa. It is a replica of the same statue — an Engineer general on a camel — which stands outside the headquarters of the corps at Chatham.'

Over the ruins of Gordon's palace stands the present white palace of the Sirdar, the spot where the hero fell being marked by a simple tablet bearing the inscription: 'CHARLES GEORGE GORDON. Died January 26th, 1885.' The place was pointed out by one of Gordon's guards who had been struck down at his side and left for dead by the Mahdi's followers.

The erection of the present palace by Lord Kitchener was probably carried out with the wise intention of destroying all traces of the Mahdi's domination, and if this were his object it has been successfully attained. The very atmosphere seems charged with memories of Gordon. The palace itself never sheltered Gordon; not a stone of it was laid until after the recapture of the city by the British. Yet even here the memory of his heroic life is kept green, as Mr Douglas Sladen says, 'by never-delayed negation, for no one ever asks which is the palace who is not told in the same breath that this was not Gordon's palace.'

After giving a vivid description of Gordon's last days and heroic death, Mr Sladen says: 'Of the awful sack of Khartoum, which lasted for six hours, not a trace remains to-day. From the dark red tropical arcades of the Gordon College, which has kindled a zeal for education through all the Sudan, for miles northward along the lofty banks of the Blue Nile, rise stately Government buildings, avenues of cool dark *lebbeks*, soaring

clumps of palms, and the bungalows of the British rulers of the land set in exquisite tropical gardens.'

The Gordon Memorial College was opened by Lord Kitchener, 8th November, 1902, on which occasion he received a warm welcome to the scene of his early triumphs.

Behind that long line of tropical beauty are situated the trading emporia of the adventurous Greeks; beyond them again is the Mosque reared by the conqueror to prove that the religion of the conquered would be respected; and beyond that are the cantonments of the tribes, wherein are quartered some four thousand souls belonging to the fiercest of the native races, not a few of them the wild Baggara and the native swordsmen who were once the flower of the Khalifa's army.

So much for the appearance of the restored and improved capital of the Sudan. At North Khartoum there is one curious relic of the city's unregenerate days — it is Gordon's famous old steamer, the *Bordeini*, originally a Thames penny steamer, which he converted into a man-of-war, now lying there, a pathetic and incongruous object, battered almost out of recognition.

CHAPTER XXII — AS CHIEF OF STAFF

THE Christmas of 1899 was indeed a gloomy one for Englishmen. The conduct of the Boer War was full of disappointment, and fruitful of much dissatisfaction; already three British and Colonial garrisons had been penned in, while regrettable mishaps had been of constant occurrence. Not that the country was lacking in patriotism, or that the army failed to do itself justice; patriotism, if anything, was exuberant, and as to the British soldier, he can always (says Bernard Shaw) stand up to anything except the British War Office. But the urgent call of the moment was for a Commander of the Kitchener type — a man with a grip of things. So, after ‘the black week’ of that gloomy December, it was resolved to despatch both Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener to the front.

The campaign — which, according to those who had entered upon it with lightsome hearts, was to be over in six weeks — had so far been productive only of reverses and disasters. There was nothing at all of ‘the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war’ about it. Then the country roused itself to action, and public opinion demanded the appointment of competent leaders. In response to the demand, Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener were forthwith despatched to the Cape, the highly popular veteran general and the most junior general; the former in supreme command, and the latter as his Chief of Staff.

There were not a few who prophesied that this arrangement of the command would fail to work; who feared that the masterful spirit and self-assertion of Kitchener would cause friction between the two men. They were mistaken. The relationship between Roberts and Kitchener was entirely free from jealousy; it was from the first one of mutual regard and esteem.

In the course of a speech at Southampton, made by Lord Roberts on his return, he said:—

‘As Chief of the Staff of the army in South Africa, Lord Kitchener has been my right-hand man throughout the campaign, and I am glad to take this opportunity of publicly expressing how much I owe to his wise councils and ever-ready help. No one could have laboured more

incessantly or in a more self-effacing manner than Lord Kitchener has done, and no one could have assisted me more loyally without a thought of self-aggrandisement.'

A characteristic story of the two Generals and their relative standards of military promptitude was printed in *The Outlook*:—

'Before Lord Roberts left Cape Town he called into his office a certain Colonel, and charged him with a certain mission. "Now," said the Chief, "how soon can you put this through? I know you'll do the best you can."

"Well," replied the Colonel, "I'll try to do it in a fortnight." "Well," Lord Roberts replied, "I know you will do the best you can," and with a pleasant smile he dismissed the officer.

'Outside the door he met Lord Kitchener. "Well?" said Kitchener, with a businesslike abruptness. "Oh!" said the Colonel, "I have just seen the Chief; he wants me to do so and so." "When are you going to get it through?" "Well," said the Colonel, "I promised to try and do it in a fortnight." "Now, Colonel," was Kitchener's retort, "if this is not done within a week we shall have to see about sending you home." And done it was.'

Another good story, which appeared in *Pearson's Magazine*, tells of a visit Lord Kitchener paid to the Mount Nelson Hotel, Capetown, about six o'clock one sunny morning. The assistant Swiss clerk in the office did not know the tall, khaki-clad officer who strode in and asked to see the hotel register. At first he refused, but rapidly changed his mind. The General's three aides took down the names and numbers of the rooms of the officers he intended to honour with a visit.

Then, led by a porter, they tramped upstairs. One by one the officers were routed out. Owing to the good time they had been having on the previous night, many of them thought it was a dream.

Only one formula was prescribed for each man: 'The special train leaves for the front at 10 a.m.; the troopship leaves at 4 p.m. for England. You have your choice, sir.' That was the Chief's ultimatum. The train was filled with quiet, subdued-looking men, who said not a word until many miles lay between them and Kitchener of Khartoum.

On 6th February, 1900, Lords Roberts and Kitchener left Capetown to take the field. The advance on Bloemfontein and Pretoria was to be made from French's camp at Modder River. Kitchener's first care was to equip the transport for the pursuit of General Cronje, whose capture was one of

the first-fruits of the Kitchener methods. The surrender of Cronje and 4000 prisoners at Paardeberg, on 27th February, happened on the anniversary of the memorable mishap at Majuba. The capitulation of the Boer General, who found himself in a most hopeless position, was unconditional, and took place at four in the morning. Kitchener has been accused of harshness in refusing Cronje's request for an armistice to bury his dead — but this was mere slander.

The facts were these. On the 18th, Kitchener's two divisions, one under Kelly-Kenny and the other under Colville, had attacked Cronje at Woolvekraal Drift, where, after some desperate fighting, a cordon round the Boers was completed by the Welsh regiment seizing the Drift. An armistice of twenty-four hours was then granted to Cronje by Kitchener, but before the expiration of the truce, Lord Roberts appeared upon the scene, and revoked the armistice, at the same time issuing a proclamation promising protection to the Free Staters if they would at once cease hostilities. The offer was ignored, and after Cronje had been again repulsed with loss, he once more proffered a request for a twenty-four hours' armistice. He was asked to surrender; he refused; his camp was then heavily bombarded. On the 21st Lord Roberts offered Cronje safe conduct for his women and children, and medical aid for his wounded. Again he refused. In the meantime the British had been drawing closer in every night, keeping up a heavy bombardment all the time. The end came when, early on the morning of the 27th, the Canadians, backed by the Gordons, rushed the trenches, the position, as previously stated, being captured soon after four o'clock.

There was nothing whatever harsher than this on the part of the British Generals. As to Lord Roberts, he has always tried to carry the consideration of humanity into the sphere of war; indeed it remains an open question whether his action after Paardeberg did not give the Boers a substantial breather; but whatever the results, it will always be remembered to his credit that he took a risk rather than plunge the armies into further bloodshed.

Lord Kitchener is not cruel, but he steels his heart against the sense of pity. With Lord Fisher he believes in the "Three R's of War — Ruthless, Relentless, Remorseless." It has been said that Lord Roberts's comparative failure after Paardeberg was due to his horror at the sacrifice of life, which determined him to wait for surrender rather than shed more

blood; whereas Lord Kitchener had no such qualms. If he thinks the sacrifice necessary, he makes it — and remains indifferent and unmoved.

The blots on his name are the blots of a merciless purpose. As in the Sudan, he desecrated the Mahdi's grave and threw the head of the prophet into the river, lest his tomb should become a shrine and the seed of a future rebellion, so in South Africa he did not hesitate to burn the farms of the Boers, and to pour the women and children into the hated concentration camps.

Till the Paardeberg affair, Kitchener had kept himself comparatively in the background. Of the wisdom of the dispositions and generalship displayed there, opinions differed very much at the time, the German military critics being of opinion that he had failed to prove the qualities of leadership in the field though they found excuses for him.

When, later, he succeeded to the command, the South African Field Force had broken up into small fragments — towards the end of the campaign there were as many as seventy columns of various sizes in the field — and the successful outcome of that campaign was admittedly due rather to the triumph of organisation than to generalship.

What British General had ever before encountered such difficulties in the field? Immediately after Lord Roberts had declared that the war was 'virtually closed,' the enemy had become more aggressive than before; De Wet had broken through the British cordon and made a dash into Cape Colony, in the hope of being joined by the Cape rebels; and when the raiders had been swept back, they scattered and worked endless mischief in the Orange River Colony. All these conditions, if not entirely novel to warfare, were very new as regards the intelligence and initiative with which they were put into practice.

The guerrilla warfare, especially as conducted by the nimble and elusive De Wet, was as mischievous as it was trying. No matter how carefully operations were conducted for clearing a district of the scattered commandos, the mobile bands of the enemy managed to slip through time after time.

As compared with these 'slim' and wily movements, the marchings and counter-marchings of the British force were as ponderous and almost as useless as circus processions. Little wonder was it, then, that our troops got stale and that the commanders became weary and impatient.

It was then that Lord Kitchener made his request to the Government to send out fresh mounted troops; and within a few weeks 30,000 men were despatched, including yeomanry, mounted rifles, Australian, and other Colonial volunteers. With these he was enabled to make his wide sweeping movements over the vast area in which he had to operate — movements in which that able cavalry commander, Sir John French, showed conspicuous ability.

If there was much farm burning and ruthless deportation of Boer families, it must not be forgotten that the roving bands of Boers still in the field were the irreconcilables, and that the iron-handed methods of Kitchener were nothing beyond the sheer necessities of grim-visaged war.

Lord Roberts himself was compelled to protest against the Boers' gross misuse of the white flag — an indefensible practice, of which the enemy was several times guilty.

The Orange River Free State was annexed and re-named the Orange River Colony, though it was overrun by the enemy; Pretoria was occupied on 5th June, 1900; but that in no sense ended the war. A few days later Buller defeated the Boers at Allemen's Nek, and entered the Transvaal. Lord Roberts inflicted another defeat on the enemy at Diamond Hill, to the east of Pretoria, and on the 20th July he commenced a general advance.

Nine days later General Hunter cornered General Prinsloo at Brand water Basin; then came the advance on Dalmanutha, and the eastward sweep of the British columns to Komati Poort. The Boers were certainly getting a severe hustling, and, driven from pillar to post, could only retaliate by forming a plot to kidnap Lord Roberts.

President Kruger, the man who in all probability had most to do with the inception of the war, fled to Europe on September nth, with the intention of rousing the nations of Europe against Great Britain — a task which at that time was by no means difficult. Rather more than a month later, on October 25th, the Transvaal was annexed. Following up this Lord Roberts announced that the war was practically at an end, and that he was returning to England. But the war was emphatically not at an end. In spite of the hustling tactics of the British Generals the resistance of the Boers was by no means worn down. As a matter of fact the position

could scarcely be said to have improved from that of twelve months previously.

CHAPTER XXIII — KITCHENER TAKES OVER THE COMMAND

ON 29th November Lord Kitchener took over the command — a gigantic task. Disorganisation was widespread, the troops were scattered about or clubbed together on no precisely ascertainable principles; important strategic points were often not held, and isolated garrisons afforded tempting opportunities for De Wet's capabilities. The boldness of the Boer tactics — they proposed to invade Cape Colony with various detached columns which were to unite and advance on Capetown, whilst Botha with 5000 picked horsemen was to enter Natal and make a dash on Durban — would require a general of no mean ability to cope with and frustrate. The task would have appalled some men. Kitchener, simultaneously conducted operations in the north of Cape Colony and the south-east of the Transvaal — points many hundreds of miles apart — and crushed both attempts. At the same time he had to keep the enemy in check in the Western Transvaal and deal with risings in the Colony, as well as to take measures for the defence of his base at Capetown.

His general policy was steadily to improve all defensive works and strengthen his lines of communication, withdrawing all unnecessary garrisons that were remote from the railway. He divided the newly-annexed territories into districts, and, by means of large combined operations, swept sections of them clear of the enemy, capturing or destroying all the supplies he came across. These sweeping drives led to the establishment of concentration camps for the preservation of the inhabitants, both white and coloured, from starvation. The magnitude of such an undertaking, in addition to the labour of commanding an immense army in the field, is eloquent testimony to Lord Kitchener's powers of organisation.

Organisation may be regarded as Lord Kitchener's strongest point; his schemes work out with the certainty and reliability of a perfectly constructed machine — all the result of accuracy of design, selective genius, and indomitable perseverance. In addition to extraordinary brain-power, he has been endowed with an immense vitality and an iron frame.

It may be extravagant to say Lord Kitchener saved the Empire, but he did come upon the scene at a time when the Empire was in urgent need; to him the nation turned with confidence to beat the Boers, and that confidence was not misplaced.

From the failure of some of the 'drives,' the blockhouse system sprang into being. One of the first lines was that from Bloemfontein to Thabanchu, and the system gradually extended till the whole country was divided into areas guarded by detachments of troops, whilst mobile columns swept across them and endeavoured to corner the Boer commandos.

Where the operation failed it was generally owing to the rawness and inefficiency of the yeomanry sent out — to add to his manifold duties, Lord Kitchener had now actually to set to work to train his troops, to teach the volunteer yeomanry how to ride and shoot before he could place them in the field.

By a line of blockhouses along the railway the southern portions of the Orange Colony were so cleared as to isolate the Cape invaders. Surely but slowly the work of stamping out the war proceeded, and by February, 1902, the Boer commandos remaining in the field were in a state of disintegration. In eighteen months, by his great administrative and organising abilities, brought to bear upon military operations of a novel and complex nature, he had crushed all the spirit out of the Boer resistance. Other matters he had to deal with at the same time were of enormous magnitude; as the care and feeding of tens of thousands of women and children in the concentration camps, the creation of a constabulary, the management of the railways, the resumption of the gold-mining industry, and the return of the loyalist population driven out by the Boers at the commencement of the war.

As to the efficiency of the blockhouse system, the following interesting remarks were elicited from Lord Kitchener himself at the time, by Mr T. W. Williams, who interviewed his lordship on behalf of *Pearson's Magazine*:—

'The blockhouses could riot be started while the enemy were in the field in force and possessed artillery, as the guns would have soon demolished them.

'These small forts are not, even now, impervious to attack. A Boer force 150 strong can cross the lines at night, and sometimes does so, but

not without being seen. This lets us know where they are — a great point. The difficulty has been to find the Boers; the country is so large that troops frequently search for a commando for eight or nine days. When they do find them, the Boers, who have been resting all that time, simply get up and go away feeling fresh, while our men are tired out.

‘The blockhouses keep the railway lines pretty safe. In case they are attacked at night, signal rockets are sent up, and the armoured trains which wait in the stations in the danger zones soon come to the rescue with their electric searchlights and machine guns.’

No one can say, from a study of Lord Kitchener’s career, that the theory of war is now an affair of weapons rather than of personal leadership. In no campaigns of modern times has the personal equation been more apparent than in the Nile expedition and in the conduct of the concluding stages of the cruel racial struggle in South Africa.

He had achieved that which was to be done — he had brought a protracted war to a satisfactory conclusion. The guerrilla methods by which alone the Boers had for so long maintained an effective resistance, he had circumvented as no one else had been able to do. The methods Lord Kitchener adopted to meet the situation made his successes seem like mere matters of routine. Through all this intricate work of administration, organisation, and systematisation he came triumphantly. Yet competent military critics said of him, that on the two memorable occasions when he was in command of troops — namely, at Omdurman and Paardeberg — he did not evince any special tactical ability.

On the other hand, it had to be confessed, when it came to the peace negotiations, that the statesman as well as the soldier was seen in Lord Kitchener’s handling of the Boer generals.

On 28th February, 1901, Lord Kitchener met Commandant Botha at Middleberg, to arrange terms for the Boers still in the field. The traditional policy of the Dutch element created difficulties on the Native Races question, and broke off the negotiations. Botha refused all terms that did not include independence for the Transvaal. Hostilities were renewed, and the slow process of ‘wearing down’ the Boers, who shunned engagements, was renewed.

The surprise and capture of the government of the Orange Free State yielded a haul of State papers which revealed the desperate position to which the Boer forces were now reduced. Yet the war dragged its weary

length along, with farm looting and train wrecking, till the month of August, when Lord Kitchener issued a proclamation that all leaders of armed bands who had not surrendered by 15th September would be permanently banished from South Africa, and that the cost of maintaining the families of burghers in the field, hitherto generously defrayed by the British, would thereafter become chargeable on the property of the burghers. The immediate result of this long-called-for ultimatum was disappointing; but in a few months it seems to have had the desired effect, and the war slowly fizzled out.

When it became clear to everybody that the ending of the war was only a question of time, it was General Botha's counsel more than anything else which induced the Boer leaders to accept the British conditions of peace; and Lord Kitchener has borne testimony to the strong but generous way in which the (now) Right Honourable Louis Botha fought every inch of his way to a permanent peace at Vereeniging.

The terms, which for unconditional surrender specifically guaranteed an imperial grant of three millions sterling for the repatriation of the Boers, respect for the Dutch language, and no imposition of the death penalty upon rebels, were accepted and signed by the Boer leaders, before Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener at Pretoria, on 31st May. The following day King Edward sent out a message of thanks to Lord Kitchener who, at the earliest moment, congratulated the Boers upon the good fight they had made, and welcomed them as citizens of the British Empire.

The war was brought to an end by the capitulation of Vereeniging in May, 1902, after three or four years of bitter conflict, entailing great loss of life and immense destruction of property — the wasteful and useless pouring out of much blood and treasure. The two Boer Republics became British possessions, and the defeated burghers were to be restored to their homes, and assisted to begin life again under King Edward VII., who was to be acknowledged by them as their lawful sovereign. This was about the aggregate result of it all.

Peace was declared, achieved with honour by the talent of one great man, who had thus proved himself triumphant alike in the north and in the south of the Dark Continent.

The Imperial Parliament tendered the nation's thanks to all the forces that had engaged in this particularly lamentable conflict. To Lord

Kitchener, who had borne the heat and burden of it all — it was mentioned incidentally in one of the many complimentary speeches made on that occasion, that he had been called upon to deal with ninety mobile Boer columns, operating over an area larger than the European States — a grant of £50,000 was voted, and he was raised to the rank of viscount. His lordship sailed for England 23rd June, 1902.

It was now seen how Lord Kitchener's presence had acted as a tonic on the army of South Africa. When he had taken over its command eighteen months previously, it was declared to be 'stale' — so much so that the croakers did not hesitate to prophesy that every regiment in the field would have to be replaced by a fresh one.

There was soon no further talk of 'staleness.' The Commander-in-Chief had tom through the country in his special train, the personification of energy, and wherever his tents were pitched, there he had distilled vigour and resourcefulness into the men.

It really was not staleness, it was just a little weariness. And so well did Lord Kitchener know how to treat this blighting military ailment, that at the end of the campaign he had the finest veteran army which has ever returned to the shores of England since the days of Wellington and the Peninsular War.

CHAPTER XXIV — CHARACTERISTIC ANECDOTES

LITTLE attention need be paid by sensible people to the tales which floated about at the time of the Boer War, intended to impress the world with the General's hardness of heart. At that time it was whispered by the gossips, and in most cases firmly believed as being substantially true, that Kitchener was 'awfully severe' with those who wanted a little leave, that he actually sent back to England a young officer who went to a theatre or a dance, or some other social function. Everybody at that time was inclined to take the view that if he was a beast, as the Rugby schoolboy said of the great head master, he was a just beast. At any rate, he was not playing at soldiers, and did not regard his great system of drives and blockhouses, by which novel method the war terminated, as just a pastime. With him, business is business. As in Egypt he had to work his officers hard, for in each case he had a difficult task to perform, and with a 'slack' army he could not have achieved it.

While martial law was in existence throughout South Africa, the civil law took a very secondary position, the power of the military being practically unlimited. At that time Lord Kitchener was the absolute ruler of an army of 250,000 men, of thousands of civilians and hundreds of thousands of natives of many races, the area of the territory under his control being nearly equal to that of the continent of Europe. The house he occupied was situated at Belgravia, near Jeppestown, a suburb of Johannesburg four miles from the city. It was not rented or purchased, but simply 'requisitioned' — the owner was Mr Julius Jeppe — and it had previously been tenanted by Lord Roberts. Here at all hours of the day and night he was receiving and despatching telegrams and cables, orderlies mounted on bicycles riding swiftly to and from the city in the service.

One of the staff officers had always to be on duty, and if the message was important, the Chief was informed at once. Everything was done in a methodical and businesslike manner, the Chief rising regularly at 5.30 and working at his correspondence till 8 o'clock, which was his breakfast time. From 9 a.m. till 1 p.m. was devoted to interviews with the various

officers and civil heads of departments with whom the business of the day was concerned. In the afternoon Lord Kitchener worked again till 5, after which he took a long walk or a brisk ride with some of his staff, preparatory to dinner, which was served at 7. The remainder of the evening was given up to recreation, generally in the form of a game or two at billiards lasting till 11 o'clock, when he retired to rest. Promptitude, regularity, and a clocklike precision marked the whole business routine of governing South Africa by martial law at that trying period.

When he travelled, no one, except the Chief of Staff, knew his destination. His train consisted of a locomotive, a private car, a car filled with a small detachment of troops, and a guard's van. The track was then cleared for him, and no warning wire allowed to be sent ahead of the train. The town he purposed to visit was reached as rapidly as possible, the only stoppages being for a change of engine or to take up water. The officers knew of his coming only when he stepped out of the train on to the station — and his surprise visits were always salutary.

If his presence was stimulating, so was his example. On one occasion when the guns got stuck in the mud at Komatiepoort, near the Portuguese frontier, the General came up, dismounted from his horse, and worked with the men with his coat off for three hours, till the guns were released.

As to his personal courage, he took his risks with the rest, as a matter of course. When he was Chief of the Staff to Lord Roberts he rode, accompanied by an aide-de-camp and two orderlies from Kroonstadt to Rhenoster during the night, a distance of thirty miles, although the country was swarming with Boers at the time. It is not surprising to learn that on one occasion Lord Kitchener narrowly escaped capture by the ubiquitous De Wet. While sleeping in a railway carriage after Methuen's encounter with the Boers at Rhenoster River, the station was suddenly attacked, and Kitchener was only in the nick of time to make good his escape on horseback.

A well-known general who went through the war with him, said — 'Lord Kitchener is very much misjudged at home in England, where people believe that he is a sort of ogre who devotes his time to chasing officers round South Africa. This is a most erroneous idea. I have worked under him now for many months, and the more one sees of Lord Kitchener the greater becomes one's liking and respect for him. No

officer who does his duty can wish for a kinder or better friend than "K," but there is trouble in store for the one who neglects it; the Chief will stand no nonsense. When once he has lost faith in an officer he has no further use for him, and he is soon sent home on some excuse or other.' It is tolerably certain no one has ever got the same amount of work out of the British officer.

Numerous and amusing are the anecdotes related of the grim General who carried upon his shoulders the weight of responsibility of all this tedious business. During the winter campaign he was wont to wear a big coat with the collar turned up to his ears, and his helmet (which was not only a large one, but slightly too large for his head) pressed down over his eyes. Thus he was not at all times easily recognisable; more especially as the strenuous life he led prevented his having a 'smart' appearance, suggestive of recent emergence from a bandbox. Sundry contretemps resulted, as was perhaps inevitable. Here are two examples.

Following 'on the heels of De Wet' was physically fatiguing and morally wearisome, so that there was a good deal not only of excusable, but also of undue straggling, especially in certain regiments which must be nameless. One day, Kitchener, as he rode along, overtook a solitary soldier marching rather limpingly, who at the same time was giving vent to an unceasing flow of rich and marvellous invective directed against South Africa in general and De Wet in particular. 'Who are you, and where are you going?' asked Lord Kitchener as he arrived alongside. Without troubling even to look round at his interrogator, the man replied, 'I belong to the Royal Bally-well Fed-ups, and I'm coming back from the Bally Wet manoeuvres.'

Upon another occasion the officer commanding an infantry battalion, waiting impatiently for the arrival of a battery of artillery, observed a well-muffled person riding leisurely towards him. Supposing the stranger to be a ground scout, or possibly an officer sent on ahead of the long-expected battery, the angry colonel rode furiously up to him and shouted so that all could hear, 'Now, then, hurry up, can't you. Where the devil are your bally guns?' With a hand which he slowly withdrew from his pocket, the man thus addressed proceeded first to open his coat-collar very deliberately, and then, sharply pushing up the front of his helmet from over his eyes, disclosed the features of Lord Kitchener himself,

wearing what was described as a 'look.' The effect was very withering. Words being needless, none passed upon either side.

Of the many anecdotes which appeared in print at the time, here are two or three collected for *Pearson's Magazine* in 1902, by Mr T. W. Williams, all of them racy, and interesting from the sidelights they throw upon Lord Kitchener's character.

A very amusing one refers to a Major in the Imperial Yeomanry who, though he was brave enough, had suffered from nerves since the siege of Ladysmith.

The Major was in command of a small force of Imperials and Colonials who were besieged by the Boers in the Transvaal quite close to the Vaal River. Although the British troops were greatly outnumbered by the enemy, they managed to hold out, as their position was a very strong one.

The Major, however, could not stand the continued fire of the pom-poms from the Boers as it made him hysterical, so he had a deep trench dug in his tent, and whenever the pompoms of the enemy started firing he burrowed like a rabbit.

The next in command was a godless Canadian Captain who feared neither man nor beast, and was in his element when the Boers were firing in their shells. On the eighth, day of the siege Lord Kitchener, then Chief of Staff, arrived on the scene with a large number of troops, on which the enemy retreated rapidly after firing a few rounds with their pom-poms. The Major was, as usual, in his 'lonely burrow' during the firing, and, as he did not come out on Kitchener's arrival, the Canadian Captain had to ride out and meet the Chief.

When Lord Kitchener rode up he said: 'Who is in command here?' The Captain replied: 'Major X.'

'Why is he not here?' demanded Lord Kitchener.

'Well, General,' said the Captain, 'to tell you the truth the Major is in his dug-out. He always burrows when he hears the pom-poms.'

Lord Kitchener laughed heartily and said: 'If that is the case I must play the part of the ferret and run him out.'

Needless to say that the Major unburrowed very quickly, and had a genuine attack of nerves on the spot.

Monocles were plentiful in Capetown, but in Johannesburg and Pretoria they were conspicuous only by their absence. 'K' does not like them, and that scaled their doom with practically every one. Captain, of a

famous cavalry regiment, out of all the swell officers, alone refused to give up his monocle for anybody. It was the current report in the regiment that he wore it in bed and also when he took his bath.

One day Lord Kitchener met the single pane officer outside the Transvaal Hotel in Pretoria. 'One minute, Captain,' said the Commander, 'may I ask if it is absolutely necessary for you to wear that glass in your right eye?'

'Yaas, certainly, Lord Kitchener — er — er — I could not see without it.'

'I am sorry to hear that, Captain, as I intended to give you a Staff appointment, but I must have men around me who can see well. Have the goodness to report yourself for duty to the officer commanding the lines of communication.'

The discomfited cavalry officer, of course, obeyed instructions. Three months afterwards he was taken prisoner by the Boers, who stripped him of his clothing, and sent him back to camp, still attired in his eyeglass — but in nothing else!

Such are a few of the stories of the Commander-in-Chief current in South Africa at the time — some of them no doubt apocryphal. Let us hope they contain naught set down in malice or wickedness.

The silent way in which Lord Kitchener had done his work, the stern determination he had shown in ending the war in South Africa fired the imagination of the people. A great ovation awaited him on his return to London, and he would have been more than mortal not to have felt some thrill of pleasure at the intensity of the welcome accorded him by the delighted populace who thronged the streets of the Metropolis on that occasion. And though he is always stoical, and has schooled himself to appear as unemotional as an Arab, close observers could not fail to detect the signs of his gratification. The conqueror was conquered.

CHAPTER XXV — COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IN INDIA

FROM 1902 to 1909 (in the latter year he was promoted Field-Marshal) Lord Kitchener filled the office of Commander-in-Chief in India, and in that field of labour his reforming hand found much important work to do.

From the moment of his return from South Africa, bearing the laurels of victory entwined with the palms of peace, it was felt that this grandly ambitious soldier would find a future in that part of the Empire which lies across the Indian Ocean. The Indian soldiers brought from Hampton Court on the day of his public welcome to the capital, looked at the new man with curious eyes, as also did the Indian princes whose armies it might become his duty to lead. As a writer in *The Sketch* (16th July, 1902) aptly put it — ‘To native India in this generation there has been but one great General — the man who led the march to Kandahar, the man who grasped the hand of his old Chief of Staff at Paddington Station; and India wonders whether the star of this new man, whose flag will soon fly on the fort of Calcutta, and at Snowdon, in sight of the Himalaya giants, will rise as high as that of the Chief who won the affection as well as the admiration of the army in India.’

Lord Kitchener arrived in India in the November of 1902, about a month previous to the Coronation Durbar of King Edward VII. On 16th November of the following year his lordship met with an accident at Simla. It was a Sunday evening, and his lordship was riding back to Simla from a private visit to a country house some six miles distant. The road at one point passes through a small tunnel, where the horse he was riding became restive. Presently the animal collided with a projecting beam so violently that the leg of the Commander-in-Chief was broken in two places. The accident was serious for the moment, but happily no permanent damage resulted.

Lord Rosebery, in an interesting speech delivered at the time, condemned the appointment of Lord Kitchener to the command of the army in India. It was a mistake, he insisted, to send our most valuable military asset to India, to do work which any one of a score of less distinguished generals could perfectly well perform, at a time when there

was such an urgent need of the best available military talent at home. His own suggestion was to make Lord Kitchener Secretary of State for War.

In India the Commander-in-Chief is a member of the Supreme Council, which may be said to correspond with the Cabinet in this country, and practically speaking he is second in importance to the Viceroy alone; he occupies relatively a far higher place than does the Commander-in-Chief at home, who is a mere official, the main outlines of whose policy are always laid down by the Cabinet and the Secretary of State.

As it happened, there was at that time a real and great need for the best obtainable man to fill the post in India; for since Lord Roberts had vacated it ten years previously, the defence of India had not received the attention its importance demanded, notwithstanding that several brilliant soldiers had in the meantime succeeded one another in the position. The appointment of Lord Kitchener, therefore, may be regarded as most opportune, if only as an able financier, to effect certain much-needed economies in the service. The military efficiency and general preparedness every one took as guaranteed by the mere association of his name with the Indian army.

The main purpose of our Indian army is not the suppression of internal tumult, for in these days of rapid transit successful mutiny is next to impossible; the great menace to the Empire lies at the frontiers. To have an army ready to the last button and the last cartridge to repel any invader, speedily and decisively, is the criterion by which its commander stands to be judged.

Lord Kitchener was faced with many problems when he took up the command, and it was a lengthy programme of reform he was called upon to study. There were defects of organisation. The military department of the Government of India generally acted like a drag on the Commander-in-Chief, and was about as useful as the fifth wheel of a coach. Too many questions affecting the army were referred to Simla.

To understand the question at issue a brief exposition of the situation as it existed may be set forth here. In the old days, when the three Indian Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras each possessed its own army, a kind of connecting link between the several forces and the Governor-General in Council was provided in the person of an officer designated the Military Member of the Council. There was no rule making it obligatory that this post should be held by a soldier. Its duties

related to what may be termed the civil side of army administration, though as a matter of practice the office was usually filled by a military man, for the obvious reason that it was easier to find a soldier of businesslike capacity than to meet with a civilian possessed of a good working knowledge of military affairs.

It thus came about after the unification of the army, that the Military Member generally being a soldier, being moreover always at the Viceroy's right hand, and having a position at the Council table co-equal with that of the Commander-in-Chief, came by degrees, although of inferior military rank, to wield an influence equal to, if not weightier than, that exercised by the responsible Commander. This arrangement had reached its worst point when Lord Kitchener took over the command. In his view such an arrangement was intolerable, and rendered his own office untenable. He declared that it constituted a veritable danger, involving as it did a duality of control, with its inevitable fruit of friction and delay.

On the other side it was argued that the Viceroy is the supreme head of His Majesty's Forces, and as both the Commander-in-Chief and the Military Member were his subordinates no duality of control really existed.

Whatever might be the 'constitutional' theory, the actual practice was that the Military Member deemed it right, not merely to interpose in purely military matters, but sometimes even to prevent the Commander-in-Chiefs proposals and requirements coming before the Viceroy in Council for discussion. It is almost incredible, but true, that quite junior officers serving in the military department were in the habit of offering criticism on the Commander-in-Chief's plans.

The inherent viciousness of such a system may easily be imagined. How Sir William Lockhart, Sir Power Palmer, and other of Lord Kitchener's predecessors tolerated it, it is difficult to understand. His lordship perhaps summed up the situation when he said that the Indian military administration had been framed mainly to meet peace requirements, and that the consideration that an army exists for war had been entirely overlooked. He declared deliberately and seriously that the peace routine had so overshadowed preparation for war, that in war the system would inevitably break down. Further, he uttered a warning note with regard to a possible war with Russia, or other large Asiatic power,

in which operations would have to be carried out under the Indian military administration. That administration needed to be as perfect as human foresight could make it.

It was a pretty quarrel as it stood, the story of which may be gathered from the Government Blue-book, entitled *Correspondence on Army Administration in East India*. In this momentous struggle between the Imperial Pro-consul on one side, and the most effective soldier of the age on the other, the controversy was carried on in a most brilliant and unexceptional style. No unworthy personalities marred the impressiveness of those weighty utterances — the clear-cut, soldierly directness of the Commander-in-Chief, on the one hand, and the statesmanlike dialectic of the Viceroy on the other. In the end, the decision of the Government in favour of the soldier was delivered by the Secretary of State, Mr St John Brodrick, with befitting judicial acumen, in good measured terms. It was a dignified quarrel, conducted in the grand manner — and Lord Kitchener, as usual, ‘came out on top.’

The dual control of the Indian army was no doubt mischievous; from time to time the military adviser on the Viceroy’s Council had steadily encroached on the authority of the Commander-in-Chief.

Lord Curzon, as Viceroy, stood for the civil control of the army, and was no doubt fundamentally right; though, as a soldier, Lord Kitchener could not be expected to see the matter in that light. Then these two strong-minded men came to grips on the question, and a most dramatic conflict it was; the masterful, iron-willed soldier against the haughty, confident statesman. When the appeal was made to Mr St John Brodrick (now Lord Midleton), as Secretary of State for India, that official umpire’s ‘mind swayed to and fro between the fear of incurring the wrath of one or the resignation of the other.’ In the end it was the will of the silent, enigmatic soldier which triumphed.

In June, 1905, the Imperial Government officially gave its adherence to Lord Kitchener’s views on the military administration of the Indian army; on 19th August following, Lord Curzon’s resignation was accepted by the King. The views and policy of the succeeding Viceroy, Lord Minto, on the subject so long under dispute, were found to be more in accord with those of the Commander-in-Chief.

Old Indian officials, both military and civilian, naturally at first looked askance at the Commander-in-Chief’s innovations; but it may be

accounted one of his greatest triumphs that nearly all of them now admit he did more to bring up to date the only real fighting force (on land) possessed by the Empire in time of peace, than any other Indian commander since the dependency came directly under the British crown. There are, as might be expected, others who take the opposite view. They contend that even Lord Kitchener was unable to do the work of the Commander-in-Chief and Military Member at the same time; that when he came to work the system which he had created he found himself tied to his office chair at Simla when he ought to have been going among the troops he commanded. These irreconcilables declare that during the last two years of his time he lost all touch with his outdoor duties, and left many legacies for his successor to contend with. Time will prove which is right.

CHAPTER XXVI — IMPERIAL DEFENCE

AFTER giving up the command in India, Lord Kitchener made an extensive tour of the British Colonies, Japan, and elsewhere.

Whilst in Australia he made a thorough study of the military problem there, and at the request of the Commonwealth Government, epitomised his impressions and recommendations in a report. This document was of exceptional interest, because the problems which it dealt with are very similar to those of our own Territorial Army. He assumed that the Commonwealth required a peace establishment of eighty thousand men, composed of trained soldiers between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five; these to be augmented in time of war by the recruits under that age and men in their twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth years.

The Memorandum presented set forth that he found excellent fighting material ready to hand, but this statement was qualified by another, in which he said 'excellent fighting material and the greatest zeal, although, of course, indispensable adjuncts to the creation of an army, are not in these days of themselves enough to enable a force to take the field against thoroughly trained regular troops with any chance of success.'

'Success in any technical career,' he continued, 'can only be achieved after a thorough elementary grounding, and this is, perhaps, more marked in the military than in any other profession.'

Since the presentation of Lord Kitchener's Report, and the action taken upon it, there has been a little trouble in the attempt to carry out what is now known as the Australian Defence Scheme, some youths declining to undergo military training, even preferring to go to prison rather than submit to this modified form of conscription. But in 1912, notwithstanding the opposition raised on religious, pacifist, and Socialistic grounds, some 20,000 trained cadets had passed into the Defence Forces. The general principle of the Defence Acts is military service compulsory on every male citizen between the ages of eighteen and thirty, military training to commence at the age of twelve.

The scheme adopted by the Commonwealth provides for the physical training of boys of twelve and thirteen as junior cadets, and this also is

made compulsory under the Defence Act. So effectively has the scheme of preparatory work been applied by the Defence Department, and the Education Departments of the various States of Australia, that most of the 800,000 children now attending school in the island continent are each day engaged for at least fifteen minutes in physical drill. The courses are so arranged that the exercises of the junior scholars lead up to the more serious drills of the junior cadets, the whole constituting the preliminary training of the future soldiers and citizens of the Commonwealth.

The opponents of the scheme contend that the Acts introduce a new principle unknown even to the great military monarchies of Europe, pointing out that in Switzerland itself the military training given to schoolboys is entirely voluntary in its character. They repudiate or belittle the clause which exempts all persons who are 'forbidden to bear arms by the doctrine of their religion,' and allows them to undertake non-combatant duties instead. They will have none of it. The attitude they assume may best be gathered from the appeal issued by the Society of Friends in New Zealand:—

'We desire to enter our protest against the punishment inflicted on those who, in resisting the demands of the Act, have dared to be true to their sense of right. That these lads, some of whom have in them the making of the best citizens, should be treated even more harshly than actual criminals is an outrage on British justice. That they should be clothed in a felon's dress, have their finger-prints taken, and be condemned to pick oakum is an oppressive indignity; but that when they have endured all this they should be denied the elementary right of a citizen — the right to the franchise — is an injustice none the less great because inflicted by the Legislature.'

That the Quakers would always remain irreconcilable to such a scheme might have been anticipated. But apparently others than Quakers were strongly opposed to the new Defence Scheme, as at the close of the first year's trial of compulsory training (August, 1912), there were no less than 16,000 defaulters liable to prosecution. Commenting on this fact, the *Melbourne Argus* said:—

'We know that the areas have been so arranged that the scattered part of our community is entirely exempted. We know, further, that the time the senior cadets are required to give to their training amounts to no more

than sixty-four hours for the whole year. So much the worse, then, is it that such an enormous proportion as 34 per cent, of the lads have deliberately or neglectfully failed to give adequate attendance at the very moderate number of drills required of them. When full allowance is made for those who have had to be excused for various causes, the number of delinquents is beyond all reason. That only six out of every nine who are bound by the law to give sixty-four hours per annum in preparation for the defence of the country have complied with the obligation is, on the face of it, an extraordinary confession of failure.'

The Minister of Defence, in face of the rain of complaints showered upon him from all parts of the Commonwealth, had to give way. In cases where fines had already been imposed, they were remitted by a special order of the Governor-General. Instructions were issued to magistrates not to impose fines, but simply to order the boys to make up their drills. Cadets who had only missed ten hours drill were not prosecuted, provided they promised to make up the drills.

Although an Amending Bill has had to be prepared, the last word on this important matter has not been heard yet. The fine has been reduced to a maximum of £5, which cannot be recovered from the parents, nor deducted from the boy's wages — a modification which goes very near to destroying the compulsory element.

The opponents of Child Conscription contended that any war likely to be waged in Australia would be of the guerrilla kind, such as the Boers waged before the eyes of an astonished world, a warfare in which bushcraft, stamina, and native-born qualities of a like character would be of infinitely more avail than the technical accomplishments usually acquired on the drill-ground. Therefore, they urged, instead of drilling the boys, the policy of the Commonwealth should be to encourage an increase of population by a well-guided inflow of desirable immigrants willing to share the burden of Empire.

One of the most searching critics of the scheme says 'the whole system is a broad shirk on the part of the man and an imposition on the boy,' under which military service will be made thoroughly distasteful to the future manhood of the country. He says:—

'The great fault staring us in the face at the moment is that compulsion — in the only form that civil and military authority can compel — is failing perilously; that a greater proportion of boys are ignoring their

duty; that default of that sort soon becomes infectious; and that as soon as disobedience becomes at all general — and is recognised as being general — compulsory service will break down.'

On inquiry amongst the boys themselves — the boys who are drilling — not the defaulters, which would be waste of time — he finds that the boys regard it as 'a disagreeable duty.' 'I have been astonished,' he says, 'to find such unanimity of opinion. It is evident that the boy isn't in the least attracted by it — he is repelled.'

Such is the controversy raised by a practical attempt to carry out Lord Kitchener's ideas of a modified Conscription in a country of freeborn Britishers. And the end is not yet.

After Lord Kitchener's return from Australasia it became one of the problems of the day how best to utilise the services of so distinguished and successful a public servant, whose primary claim to notice was that he had proved himself a strong man in every post to which he had been appointed.

Although in the opinion of all open-minded men he had shown himself a first-rate business man in the real and best sense of that much-abused term (was he not suggested as a capital man to run the Army and Navy Stores?), this was not the opinion which the official mind had formed of him. His inborn hatred of red-tape and the tiresome trivialities of officialdom was too well known. He is a man who has always known what he wants, who strikes at once at the root of a matter, undeterred by precedent and words. Lord Kitchener possesses, in fact, immense driving power, and therein lies the great secret of his success.

Hide-bound officials, both military and civilian, were heard to declare that he was unbusinesslike in his methods. But surely his work was a sufficient answer to this. In the Sudan the little Egyptian army had, under his control, proved itself a most workmanlike machine, yet the correspondence and returns in the management of this affair were reduced to the absolute minimum. The conduct of that campaign, of which he was in sole charge, was essentially businesslike, and no fair-minded person could gainsay the fact.

Three different and very important posts were regarded as calling urgently for the services of the famous Field-Marshal at this time. Some people held that he ought to have succeeded Lord Minto as Viceroy of India; others thought he should have been given control of the War

Office in order to secure real efficiency in the army; others, again, amongst whom were many peculiarly capable of judging from their own knowledge and experience, were of opinion that he should go to Egypt — the state of that country demanding the presence of a man whom every prominent native knows and respects.

But the Duke of Connaught, having at that moment just resigned the post of Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, Lord Kitchener was selected by the Government as the most fitting person to succeed His Royal Highness in that office. There may, or there may not have been political reasons for such an appointment, but it met with almost universal condemnation, the popular disapproval being admirably set forth in the pages of *Punch* — that licensed jester, in a topical cartoon (27th April, 1910), not hesitating to call his lordship's appointment to the Mediterranean command as 'a waste of good material.' The *Saturday Review* (30th April, 1910) was equally outspoken: 'It is unthinkable that he should be relegated to a sinecure post in the Mediterranean, with headquarters at Malta. Why, he would not even be a post office — as the Duke of Connaught plaintively remarked when holding it — because Malta is not on the direct steamship route between Gibraltar and Egypt; the result being that, to save time, many important documents must perforce be despatched to London by the local authorities over his head. We imagine, however, that few persons outside the Government wish to send him there; 'and we know well the reasons why the Government wish to do so. They are twofold. In appointing a Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief they undoubtedly created a costly superfluity. So to avoid an admission of their folly they were bound to appoint a successor to the Duke of Connaught. A second reason, and perhaps a more potent one, is that they view with justifiable alarm the presence at Whitehall of a man who was strong enough to have his way in India in the face of Lord Curzon.'

There may have been some element of truth in all this; but the arguments used by the writer of the article would have made a stronger appeal had they been expressed with less animus.

There were not wanting a few who hailed Lord Kitchener's appointment as High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean as the opening of another successful chapter in that soldier-statesman's brilliant career.

The post was a newly created one; Gibraltar, Malta, Crete, Cyprus, and Egypt were scooped together and given this collective title. The five stations were grouped and made to look as important, say, as the command in the East Indies. The area of the Mediterranean is over a million square miles. The British possessions on its shores comprise Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus. We have also troops in Egypt and Crete. The exact number of British troops at these stations was, at the moment, 17,521. The British troops under Lord Kitchener's control in India had numbered over 76,000. Malta being the headquarters of the command, if the Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief wished to inspect the troops in Egypt, he would have to make a voyage of 820 miles; if those in Gibraltar, 1000 miles; if those in Crete, 600 miles; and if he felt anxious about the discipline and training of the 123 men in Cyprus he would have to travel 1000 miles.

This was the way the critics put it. And as the Commander-in-Chief was not to be allowed to interfere in masters of local organisation, but only to inspect, it was felt that such a post was altogether unworthy of the abilities and high qualifications of a man like Lord Kitchener, who, said the cavillers, should be called upon to think out problems of high strategy and imperial defence.

That Lord Kitchener was one of the best fitted men for any of the posts named, everyone was willing to concede. Yet his friends and admirers were at times really in doubt whether it would be as wise to despatch him to a civil, as to a military post; whether his experience in statesmanship was yet ripe enough to maintain the high reputation to which he had attained as a soldier.

In his world tour after leaving India his lord-ship paid a visit to Japan as representative of the King and the British army at the great military manœuvres held there in the November of 1909. Then, as previously mentioned, he proceeded to Australia and New Zealand at the request of the respective governments of those colonies, in order to inspect their troops and advise as to the development of their military forces in accordance with suggestions made under discussion at the Imperial Conference in London. In the meantime the duties of the Mediterranean command had been undertaken by Sir Frederick Forestier-Walker.

On 13th June, 1910, the *Times* definitely announced that Lord Kitchener would not take up the Mediterranean command, as had been

announced in August, 1909. In October it was further announced that the desire so often expressed for the utilisation of the Field-Marshal's services would be gratified by his appointment to the Defence Committee. This announcement was hailed everywhere throughout the Empire with intense satisfaction. In the end, the Mediterranean command was given up, and Lord Kitchener found more congenial employment in the land of the Pharaohs — 'in the land over which the Sphinx looks out with inscrutable and immemorial calm, a proper home for that silent, sphinx-like man.'

CHAPTER XXVII — EGYPTIAN AFFAIRS

IN the autumn of 1911, on the death of Sir Eldon Gorst, the British Agent in Egypt, Lord Kitchener was sent out to succeed him. His first official day in Cairo was September 29th. On October 1st Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt forms an integral part. Under the obligation of its vassalage, it may be called upon to provide the suzerain state with an unlimited number of troops, should she require them. But Great Britain being the occupying power, and friendly with both belligerents, the Nile Valley was kept entirely free from the operations of war. The British Government had apparently entered into an agreement to keep Egypt absolutely neutral, permitting no Egyptian levies to be raised, and no Turkish troops to enter Tripoli through the Nile territories. The despatch of Lord Kitchener to Cairo and the simultaneous outbreak of hostilities can hardly be attributed to mere coincidence.

Neither can it be denied that the situation was extremely delicate or without its element of danger. The new British Agent, however, was as conciliatory as he was firm, with the result that Egyptian officers were induced to curb their patriotic ambitions and refrain from volunteering for active service; even the warlike Bedouin chieftains were led to recognise the inadvisability of marching their tribes into Tripoli. Everyone by some unknown influence came to believe that Lord Kitchener's prejudices favoured the Mussulmans; and by his great tact he not only enlisted the sympathies of the native press, and kept the country quiet, but delighted everybody by the urbanity and cordiality of his manner.

'He put his hands on my shoulders,' cried an old Sheik, who had had an interview with the English ruler, 'and said to me, "Am I not your father? Will a father forget his children?"' It was indeed wonderful to see the beams of delight with which each suitor came forth from the Agent's presence.

Lord Kitchener's influence was by no means lessened by his excellent relations with the French. Had he not once fought on their side against

the Germans? Was he not a supporter of the French claims in Morocco? And so everything moved along with surprising smoothness.

It must not be forgotten that for some years the political atmosphere of Egypt had been seriously disturbed by the growth of a new Nationalist party opposed to British rule on patriotic principles. Though much of this opposition had been dissipated by the clever policy of Lord Cromer's much-abused successor, Lord Kitchener had yet to carry out the administrative reforms for which Sir Eldon Gorst had but cleared the way.

Gradually many changes in the Government administration — changes ranging over a wide diversity of departments — were carefully introduced. Every department, without exception, was subjected to a degree of scrutiny which permitted no flaw to escape detection; and in the decision respecting it, the head of the department turned with confidence to Lord Kitchener for the final opinion. No longer did subordinates, the stupid or inexperienced equally with the competent and efficient, follow their own wills without justifying themselves to their superior. Here is a story *a propos* of these domestic reforms.

A land company which was developing a certain suburb of Cairo wrote to his lordship complaining that, although they had offered very fair terms to the Ministry of Finance for co-operation in the making of a motor-road which should link them with the city, only evasive answers had been received, and the matter had now dragged on for three or four years. Lord Kitchener having satisfied himself that the proposals were satisfactory, told the Financial Authorities simply that he wished to motor out to the suburb on a certain date, and that the road must then be finished. 'But,' they objected, 'labour is expensive and difficult to obtain.' 'Turn the prisoners on to the work,' said he. 'That isn't possible,' they replied, 'we have not got a sufficient number of warders to keep them in hand along a straggling line of that kind.' 'Warders!' exclaimed Lord Kitchener, 'What is the Army of Occupation doing with itself? Let them act as warders. Please see that the work begins tomorrow.'

As actual ruler of Egypt, Lord Kitchener has resumed, to the mild extent prevalent in that country, the pomp and circumstance of power which had been abandoned in recent years. The British Agent is

popularly recognised as a very great man — a sort of Grand Vizier, Commander-in-Chief, and King's favourite rolled into one.

Lord Kitchener's attitude towards the natives, and towards the question of their participation in the government of the country, is in principle identical with that of Sir Eldon Gorst. Personally he finds no difficulty in governing Egypt, and it is to be hoped his successor will rule with the same blissful tranquillity. The opinion of Egyptian Ministers and officials is scrupulously consulted; they are led to feel that they have some voice in public affairs, and share the responsibility with him.

The future of Egypt in its relationship to Great Britain is a problem yet to be considered. A forcible annexation is unthinkable; but it has been hinted that the purchase of Egypt for, say, twenty millions sterling, might be quite agreeable to the Porte. Then as a part of the Empire, with the grant of a suitable form of government, the future of that ancient land with which the destinies of Lord Kitchener have been so closely linked, is full of brilliant possibilities.

In the summer of 1912 a conspiracy is alleged to have existed for the assassination of the Khedive, Lord Kitchener, the Egyptian Premier (Mohammed Said Pasha), and the Attorney-General (Abdul Khalek Pasha). These political murders were to have been carried through by four youthful Arabs, members of the National Party, and promoters of a secret society for recovering Egyptian independence.

When Lord Kitchener was making his inspection of Lower Egypt, Captain Fitzgerald noticed a young effendi who was conspicuously trying to approach Lord Kitchener, and directed that he should be watched by detectives. These later on discovered the secret society's meeting-place at Cairo, and, disguised as poor sheiks, attended a meeting at which it was resolved that the four conspirators should assassinate the intended victims during the month. Upon being arrested, the culprits gave their names respectively as Mohammed Iman Waked, Mohammed Taher el Arabi, Mohammed Abdul Salam, and Abdul Rahman el Sabaki. Being brought to trial and found guilty, they were condemned to long terms of imprisonment.

A glimpse of the present-day condition of the great equatorial province which the Consul-General brought under subjection is obtainable from *England in the Sudan*, a work by Jacoub Pasha Artin, a translation of which was recently published by Messrs Macmillan. After having had

every facility offered him for a thorough examination of the country, and aided very materially in his inquiries by his thorough knowledge of Arabic, his report may be accepted as being fairly reliable.

‘At Khartoum,’ he writes, ‘everything is *à la Gordon*. The palace where he was assassinated, and which had been destroyed, is now rebuilt ... As soon as we arrived in Khartoum, I, who had already been there in 1902, perceived a change for the better. The quays, streets, plantations, houses, are all more in accordance with ... a civilised town ...

‘Only about fifteen years ago no white man could have passed a single hour in this big town without being killed or made prisoner, and today nearly all the races and religions of the world meet there.’ He mentions that ‘from the roof of the Khalifa’s house a splendid view is obtained of Omdurman and the plain, and even of the battlefield of Kereri.’

Some of the information Pasha Artin had gathered is disquieting. According to the view expressed in his book the Arabs still regard the Mahdi and his Khalifa, Abdullahi, as saints and martyrs; even the lesser men who have gained brief and costly notoriety by the murder of British officials are venerated. They failed because Allah willed it, but the Arab is by no means convinced that Allah will continue to hide his face from ‘True Believers.’ Then again, they know that if a new Mahdi arises and they reject his summons he will not hesitate in the hour of victory to put them to violent death; while if they flock to his standard and he suffers defeat, their penalty at the hands of the British authorities will be nothing worse than a term of imprisonment. So, given the opportunity, it is thought they may unite against British rule, because failure incurs the lesser penalty. Of course this is only the view of one man, who admits his entire satisfaction with the administration of the country. If the natives do retain any Mahdist ideals, it should be the aim of British rule to dissipate them by giving better and worthier ideals to cherish.

CHAPTER XXVIII — CONSUL-GENERAL AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY IN EGYPT

IN April, 1912, Lord Kitchener presented his first report as Agent and Consul-General of Egypt. It was an illuminating and most interesting document, revealing the ruler of Egypt as one who thinks well of the people over whom he is called upon to rule, who can sympathise with their point of view, and can see deep enough into Islam to appreciate its essential democracy as resting upon the brotherhood of man. It is at once apparent from the tone of this document that Lord Kitchener loves Egypt and is devoted to its welfare.

The report dealt with the political and economic conditions of the country, with agriculture, drainage, and education.

Broadly, it appeared that Egypt had not enjoyed a prosperous year. The Budget had shown 'a surplus of nearly £2,000,000; and customs and railway receipts — excellent indices of prosperity — rose considerably. The cotton crop, after threatening to fail, was saved, and though smaller in quantity brought a heavier price than in previous years. Many important public works are in hand and will be pushed forward. Undoubtedly on its material side, and looked at in the bulk, Egypt compares favourably with many another country.

'But even the material side has its depressing features. Egyptian prosperity under the Cromer regime came to rest upon the cotton crop, and the cotton crop is threatened by the worm. Probably the root cause of the disease is excess of water. The irrigation schemes executed by Lord Cromer were not altogether well designed, and the land is becoming waterlogged. A Commission is investigating the problem, and Lord Kitchener has taken up the work of irrigation with characteristic energy.

'Public works of great importance have been put in hand with the greatest possible despatch. The chief of these is the draining of the Delta, a scheme that has been discussed for years, only to be laid aside on account of the vast expense. These drainage works that are being undertaken will cost at least fifteen million pounds. It happens that the valuable State domains, heavily mortgaged by Ismail, now become

negotiable, so that Egypt has good security to offer for a possible loan. Another big work that has been started within the last few weeks is a road from Cairo to Helouan, a much-needed thoroughfare, the lack of which has caused great inconvenience. The cost, the difficulty of finding labour, and several other points were all laid before Lord Kitchener when the question was mooted. Objections were named only to be put aside, their solution being confidently left to those in whose charge the work would be placed. Within a week of the order the road to Helouan was begun, and in the daily papers there is a large Government advertisement offering suitable sites along the road for sale.

‘Lord Kitchener has little faith in the drastic deportation law, which gave the authorities power to segregate bad characters without trial. Crime, he wisely observes, can be finally checked only by the spread of education and civilised ideas. It is precisely the educational poverty of Egypt which is the darkest blot upon the record of Lord Cromer, who left it far worse than he found it. To Sir Eldon Gorst’s credit be it said that he began, if only tentatively and hesitantly, to make the omission good. It is plain that Lord Kitchener means to carry on the spread of education. At present education is almost wholly in the hands of the Provincial Councils; but a grant of £100,000 has been made *by* the Central Government. That is only a commencement, but a commencement of this kind is notable enough.’

Like the practical man he is, Lord Kitchener deplotes the ‘bookish’ character of the education being given to the fellaheen, which, he declares, leaves some of the most useful faculties of the mind undeveloped. He believes that manual exercises would ‘train the eye to accuracy in observation, the hand to skill in execution, and the mind to a sense of the importance of truthfulness in work.’ Lord Kitchener betrays a proper anxiety as to the type of rural school to be evolved. Egypt depends on agriculture for its prosperity, To such a land a rural exodus would be ‘an economic and social disaster of considerable magnitude.’ In his horror of a merely literary education, he advocates a half-time system of education allowing of labour in the fields for the remainder of the day.

Lord Kitchener takes a keen personal interest in education, and is inspecting each Government school in turn.

That a change had come over the Egyptian Administration became apparent as soon as Lord Kitchener took up the reins of government in 1911. According to the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent:—

‘Cordiality to natives formed no part of the programme of Sir Eldon Gorst, but early in October a well-known Egyptian advocate wrote to a Cairo daily paper commenting warmly on the ease of access which Lord Kitchener granted to his countrymen. The appointment of a native aide-de-camp, too, made a good impression, as the coldness of a lengthy wait in an ante-room is removed if an Egyptian officer is present to chat pleasantly over the inevitable cup of coffee. The knowledge that, within reasonable degrees, any person requiring advice or assistance can be accorded an interview gives confidence to Egyptians, and strengthens friendly feeling between them and the English.

‘In all the Government departments work is carried on with a new strenuousness and energy. Bribery has received a check: corruption is one of the things Lord Kitchener has never tolerated, because he knows it saps the very life-blood of any system.’

One who knew Lord Kitchener in India was wont to say, ‘Lord Kitchener makes his presence felt without being much in evidence,’ and as it was in India, so in Egypt. There have been false reports to the effect that large detachments of Bedouins have gone to assist the Arabs in Tripoli against the Italians, in spite of the fact that Egypt has been declared neutral. That a few camel loads have gone over by the way of Mariout may be true, but the leakage has been slight. The leading Bedouin chiefs know well that once such operations were begun in earnest the results would be disastrous to themselves. The Bedouin of Egypt has been exempt from conscription since the days of Mohammed Ali, and he highly esteems this privilege. When in the early days of the present war the designs of the Egyptian Bedouin to help those in Tripoli began to be known, Lord Kitchener sent for certain chiefs, and indicated that if their tribes wished to take part in military operations he would be happy to organise them into a Bedouin corps, and they would thenceforward form a regular part of the Egyptian army. The chiefs hastily disclaimed any such intention, and assured Lord Kitchener that the report was mistaken.

A glimpse of Lord Kitchener at work was afforded us recently by General Sir Rudolph Slatin Pasha, Inspector-General of the Sudan, who

in an interview with Reuter's correspondent in Vienna, referring to the industrial conditions in the Sudan, said 'that unfortunately they had had a very bad rainy season; the rainfall was only local, and in many districts there was no rain at all. But in spite of this the export trade had been very good, notably in such commodities as sesame, groundnuts, and gum.' Speaking of Lord Kitchener's work in Egypt, Sir Rudolph said 'that the British Agent was keeping people on the move. The main part of the population were coming to realise that it was much more important for them to improve their financial and economic situation than to continue to waste their time in political agitation of a very doubtful value. Lord Kitchener's popularity might be gathered from the crowded state of the Agency, where people of all classes came constantly to beg his advice and assistance in all kinds of matters, very often trivial private affairs of their own. They came because they knew Lord Kitchener made a point of receiving everybody, he talked to them in Arabic, and showed a genuine desire to help them. The Egyptian Ministers and official classes were beginning to recognise that the British Agent was a real friend of Egypt.'

His policy in Egypt has not only been an unqualified success, but he has become exceedingly popular with native Egyptian opinion itself. Lord Kitchener has always made himself most accessible to the natives, and the zeal and energy he has shown in developing the interests of the people has been very widely appreciated.

While the native press has been allowed a large measure of freedom, some prosecutions unfortunately have had to be undertaken. The Consul-General of Egypt, although he did not like them, came to the conclusion that these press prosecutions were necessary. For a most mischievous statement had been promulgated by the native organs — that the British policy in Egypt was anti-Islam. This could not be allowed to go uncorrected, and no one has been at greater pains to set the matter right than the Consul-General, Lord Kitchener.

The Residency-General in Cairo is about to be extended, for the activities in which his lordship has engaged since he became the British representative in Egypt have made such extension and augmentation both desirable and highly necessary.

CHAPTER XXIX — CONCLUSION

LORD KITCHENER has been in command of British forces in the field during our last two operations of importance; since then he has held command of our Indian army, a force (always kept on a war-footing) whose organisation and readiness for war he has vastly improved.

He has played many parts in his time, and perhaps none with more real enjoyment than that of surveyor and map-maker in Palestine, when life was young with him. He still has memories of his stay at Mount Carmel. One function of the monks he avows he never could emulate, though he had this in common with them, that they were destined to bachelordom; for whereas he found them excellent hosts, he accuses himself of being the worst host in the world. He does not love a function in which he has to 'receive'; and when he is welcomed by crowds, he asks innocently what they have come out to see. He has never appealed to the mob, or advertised himself in any way; he is not the man to be swayed by censure or influenced by flattery.

No man has gone so far with such complete reliance on his own merits and scorn of the arts of advertisement; yet, withal, he has won for himself an enduring place in history. As Sir Herbert Kitchener he occupied a position almost unique in the experience of British generals. Not only had he found himself at the head of a large army in the field before he was fifty, but he enjoyed extraordinary advantages in the command—something like complete independence — able to buy, to choose, to control, just as he pleased. And, above all, he achieved a most uncommon feat — he gained the almost blind confidence of the British public.

Surely no man ever more hated parade, show, and theatrical effect, or less courted popularity. When actively engaged he never spoke to a private soldier, he never looked at him. He knew his fighting generals, he trusted them, and never did he find his confidence misplaced. His test is Napoleons — What has he done? If that is not answered satisfactorily he has no use for the man, even though he were his own brother.

Everyone knows how Lord Roberts became 'Bobs' to the men he led so truly and so well; but Lord Kitchener has no affectionate diminutive of his name. He is 'K.' for short, in the mouths of the army. Like the Great Duke he has the respect and confidence of his men, but he never used the softer arts to win their affection.

He has been called the 'man of ice and iron,' but the 'ice' is imaginary. He is in reality, a most kindly man, with a strong sense of humour. The officers of his escort and his staff invariably like him very much; he is good company at the billiard table, and thoroughly appreciates a good joke, though it may be directed against himself. The men who served under him in Egypt liked him even when he bore hardest upon them, for they said that with him they always knew what to expect — it was not a case of fair weather one day and foul the next. He was always studiously fair.

He may be a hard man, but if not typically, English, he is 'very' English. The businesslike Englishman is never voluble; with Lord Kitchener the national reticence runs, as we have seen, to taciturnity. 'Allah created the English mad ... certainly also is Kitchener mad,' says the Mohammedan schoolmaster in Kipling's *Five Nations*.

'They consult not creed nor clan

Behold, they slap the slave on the back, and behold he ariseth a man.'

We are quoting from the piece entitled *Kitchener's School*, which is a *propos* of the College built at Khartoum in 1898 for the Sudanese:

This is the message of Kitchener, who did not break you in jest.

He said 'Go safely ... I have accomplished my vow!'

That was the mercy of Kitchener.

He possesses the useful faculty of being able to pick out clever men, and to employ their abilities to the best advantage. He may not be particularly popular with his officers — no disciplinarian ever is — but they all respect and admire his exceptional qualities. Subalterns notably are afraid of 'K.' for no valid reason, perhaps, but because he is so stiff, silent, and formidable-looking. His large steel-blue eyes are so chilling in their scrutiny, and the square set jaws look so determined and unyielding. He is so tall, too, though not heavily built with it, his broad chest tapering down to the waist, and his long legs being comparatively thin — that is, in proportion to his exceptional height. But his form and features

are all familiar enough with the public, from the multitude of the published portraits of 'the great English soldier.'

From the countless newspaper and other illustrations that have appeared, everyone knows General Kitchener's appearance when campaigning; the long, lithe, active figure, with back as straight as a dart, the almost dandified finish to the uniform, and the workmanlike manner of the equipment. Throughout his Egyptian campaigning, it will be noted, he wore the native tarbouche. A good rider, sitting his mount with easy grace and the lightest of hands, Kitchener is every inch a soldier and a leader of men.

Inches, however, do not confer eminence. Though (by the way) most of us would be prepared to hear that Lord Kitchener attains a height of six feet three inches, few of us would be prepared to learn that only half an inch separates the height of Lord Roberts from that of Wellington, or that Lord Roberts is half an inch taller than General Sir John French.

Lord Kitchener's face, after all, is not unkindly to those who have nothing to fear from the estimate he makes in the first keen, swift glance. It is only that he is not to be deceived, that his time is not to be wasted.

There are those of his intimates who insist that he has his moments of warmth and laughter, but the stories they relate illustrative of the trait are somewhat mirthless ones. Most people think he fits in very admirably with O'Connell's description of the Englishman — the typical Englishman — who 'has all the qualities of the poker, except its occasional warmth.'

For one whose life has always been so active, there has been little need to take exercise for the sake of exercise. In walking or riding he does not wear glasses, but when poring over maps and charts he finds it necessary to have resource to a pair of gold-mounted pince-nez. His right eye was injured many years ago by the premature explosion of a mine at Chatham.

It is his aloofness which has made him so much feared. Yet Mr Bennet Burleigh, the famous war-correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, says, 'In manner he is good natured, a listener rather than a talker, but readily pronouncing an opinion if called upon.' Another eminent journalist has given it as his opinion that Lord Kitchener's silence is not designed for effect, but springs from a solitary and self-reliant mind.

Kitchener campaigning and in full command, discarded most of the precedents of the drill-ground as so much useless lumber; he based his dispositions upon the habits and tactics of the enemy, and upon nothing else. And when the moment for action came, he seemed to look upon the battle as a necessary, but exceedingly vulgar and noisy brawl; the intellectual part of him seemed always to regret that he could not starve or strangle the enemy into submission without the crude appeal to brute force. His genius is for the preparation rather than the battle to which it leads up; and it is not by his battles — as Omdurman and Paardeberg plainly demonstrated — that he will take high rank as a commander. His methods may be ponderous and slow, but all the same they are none the less sure in their ultimate effectiveness.

As a military economist and a reformer he has deserved well of his country. If he has never exactly hanged an army contractor — as Wellington once threatened to do in the Peninsula — the contractor serving forces under the Kitchener command has ceased to batten on the public purse. This grip on the purse strings became evident after the younger general took over the command in South Africa — a fact fully revealed by the inquiry of the War Stores Commission; and when in course of time he went to India, he kept up the same resistance to legalised plunder. How many vampires sucking the life's blood of the public services in that dependency he cleared away it would be difficult to estimate. But wherever he met with sinecures created in the departmental services by a shameless nepotism, or came across anything in the shape of official rapacity, he ruthlessly cleared them all out, insensible alike to the blandishments of high-placed influence, or to the ill-concealed animosity of the Anglo-Indian 'Tite Barnacles.' Truly has it been said of him that corruption and jobbery wither in his presence. No more faithful guardian of the public interest has ever been known — certainly not in military annals. His first campaign in the Sudan was fought — and successfully, too — for £300,000 less than he had estimated, a feat never before accomplished by any British general, and one which induced Lord Cromer to declare that had Kitchener not become one of the greatest generals of the world, he would have been one of the greatest Chancellors of the Exchequer.

Lord Kitchener has demonstrated his power to create, to combine, and organise material, no matter how rough and unsuitable, into a new, a

harmonious, and definite shape. His success from first to last has been due to this power, a power he possesses in a higher degree and more concrete form than any other servant of the modern state. Upon any task entrusted to him he brings this faculty to bear, and his efforts are never relaxed, his dogged patience practically knowing no limitations, his whole being absorbed in the work before him till the task is successfully accomplished.

His methodical conduct of operation excites the admiration of military critics. In nearly three years of war it can be safely asserted that nothing of any consequence went wrong. He reduces the chances of battle to a negligible fraction by his clear foresight and a policy of deliberate and well-calculated action — there may be higher strategy than this, but it is not always so effective or so materially economical in the end.

After his triumphs in the Sudan and before the war in South Africa, his biographer said of him in *Vanity Fair*:— ‘He is a first-rate soldier; he is also a hard, obstinately decided man, who has made himself, for his success in life is in no way due to anything but his own determination. He may not be very popular with all his army, but that army does not include a man who does not respect him. He knows how to treat the Dervish, and his memory is so marvellous that on quite petty details he can correct his officers on their own business; it is said of him, indeed, that he never errs, yet he never takes notes. He is a very sensible fellow who knows his business.’

It is patent to the world that he has not climbed by backstairs influence, that he never got pushed along by what is called the smart set of society. His position has been won by other and more manly means. As to the stories about his being a woman-hater and so forth, and one, therefore, not qualified to do well in society, they may be dismissed as purely imaginary. He has not married because he has been so entirely wrapped up in his profession, though it has been said that soldiering is not to him so much a profession as a religion. As he himself has gone through life without making home ties, following the soldier’s career in strange lands, so he would insist upon others following the same hard course. Wives and kindred, and the ties of home life, are not for the active warrior; General Kitchener therefore has no predilection for the married officer, and is entirely out of sympathy with him. In the Sudan he was intolerant of officers who wished to get away to the gaieties of the Cairo season; at

the Cape he would have no officers' wives at Pretoria. The business of a soldier on active service at the front is fighting, not 'capering in a lady's chamber to the lascivious pleasing of a lute.'

Her late Majesty Queen Victoria said of Lord Kitchener, 'He is said not to like ladies, but he is charming with me,' and her experience is the experience of other less highly placed ladies who meet him. He has never disguised his firm opinion that ladies are out of place with a campaigning army, and therefore when in Egypt with an army that was always on active service, he made it a *sine qua non* that his officers should be unmarried men.

Since the days of the Iron Duke no military commander has held such a unique position in the estimation of the general public as that now occupied by Lord Kitchener. If he has not exactly 'saved the Empire,' he has by his military successes relieved the nation in times of the gravest anxiety. He is a warrior whom it would be extremely difficult to replace; and if ever a British general has to be called upon to take the field again in a war of any serious magnitude — which Heaven forbid! — there is no other living soldier who could inspire the nation with the same amount of confidence. His very name gives a sense of security and power.

Lastly, it must be accounted unto him for righteousness that, so far, he has kept clear of party politics. He is of a nature too cold, impartial, and detached ever to be a partisan. As the servant of the State he has not allowed himself to become the catspaw of either party, though either of them would doubtlessly hail him as a recruit, if not, indeed, adopt him as a leader. Whatever his next task may be, it is fervently to be hoped no shedding of blood will be involved; for if the necessity arises he will not shrink from shedding it copiously. It may be that the business awaiting him is the reorganisation of the home army, a task that calls even more urgently than did the Indian army for a strong reforming hand. But whatever the work is, we may rest assured it will be done in the uncompromising spirit of the Kitchener family motto: 'Thorough.'

As yet, however,

' — *his errand is not fulfilled — time will show!*'



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Lord Kitchener's commanding image on British recruitment posters of the First World War is one of the most iconic and enduring pictures of history, known, parodied and imitated the world over.

First published in the year before war erupted and Asquith appointing him Secretary of State for War in the Cabinet, 'The Life of Lord Kitchener' tells of the man before he became "the Poster".

Hackwood traces Kitchener's early life and imperial campaigns, from childhood in Ireland to RMA Woolwich, and on into Egypt, Sudan and India, becoming the most able soldier Sir Evelyn Baring had come across.

Weaving the political with the military and strewn with insights from those who encountered Kitchener, this period biography is a fascinating insight into a Hero of the Empire and British attitudes of the era.

F. W. Hackwood (1851-1926) was an ardent educationist from Wednesbury, working for the Birmingham Education Authority, and keen sportsman, founding Wednesbury Strollers F.C. In addition to the many interests that directed his life, he wrote prolifically for periodicals and gained wider renown as "the Black Country historian and antiquary".

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